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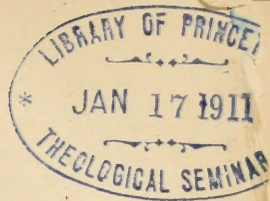
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A COMMENTARY

ON

James W. Loh

THE PSALMS OF DAVID

BY

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JOHN CALVIN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



OXFORD: PRINTED BY D. A. TALBOYS,
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JOHN CALVIN'S COMMENTARY ON THE PSALMS.

PSALM XLVII.

Some are of opinion that this Psalm was made when the temple was dedicated, and the ark of the covenant placed in the sanctuary. But because it is an unsupported conjecture, it is better, if I am not deceived, to let that circumstance pass, and to consider what it contains, and to what use it is to be chiefly applied. There is no doubt it was appointed for solemn assemblies, which is easy to be gathered from the whole tenor of it. Nay, it may be that David dictated it to the Levites before the temple was built, when the ark rested as yet in the tabernacle. But whosoever was the author of it, he exhorts not only the Israelites, but also all nations, to worship the one true God. Although it chiefly extols the favour that God vouchsafed to the offspring of Abraham for the time present, like as salvation also was to spring forth to all the world out of that fountain, yet it treats of the future kingdom of Christ. For it declares that the glory which shone in the shadowy sanctuary should be manifested far and wide, when God himself should spread out the beams of his grace afar off, so that kings and nations should unite in fellowship with the children of Abraham.

[*A Song to the chief of the sons of Korah.*]

2 All people clap your hands; sing cheerfully to GOD with the voice of leaping.

3 For the LORD is high, terrible, and a great King above all the earth.

4 He hath brought nations in obedience under us, and put the Gentiles under our feet.

5 He hath chosen our inheritance for us, the glory of Jacob, whom he loved. Selah.

2 *All people clap your hands, &c.*] As he bids all people to clap their hands at God in token of gladness and joy, or

rather exhorts them to such unwonted joy that the vehemence thereof may burst forth into the outward act of leaping, it is certain that he treats of their salvation. For if God should set up a formidable kingdom among the Gentiles, he would rather cast down all men's hearts, and overwhelm them with despair, than give them occasion of dancing. Besides, he preaches not of the ordinary grace of God, but of such a grace as, shedding forth incredible joy upon the whole world, should stir up the minds of all men to celebrate God's praises. Therefore when a little after he adds that nations were brought in obedience to Israel, it must needs be understood, not of slavish submission, but of such a subjection as were better and more to be desired, than all the kingdoms of the world. For it were against reason that such as are in thralldom under compulsion of force and fear, should leap for joy. Indeed many nations were tributary to David and to his son Solomon; but in suchwise that they repined at it, and were grieved at the heart that that yoke was laid upon them; so far were they from giving thanks to God gladly and cheerfully. Therefore seeing that there is no service happy and desirable, save that whereby God, by the auspices of Christ his son, tameth and subdueth those that were rebels before, it follows that this eulogium agrees only to Christ's kingdom, who is called a high and dreadful king, not because he terrifies the wretched, over whom he reigneth, with tyrannical violence, but because his majesty, which before was held in contempt, will suffice to quell the unruliness of the whole world. For it is to be noted that the meaning of the Holy Ghost is, that seeing the Jews had been contumeliously treated and oppressed a long while, and afflicted with sundry calamities from time to time, God's gracious goodness was now so much the more conspicuous towards them, because the nations that bordered aound about them were subdued, and David's kingdom in the height of glory. Meanwhile, that what I have suggested is true, namely, that this applies to the kingdom of Christ, is obviously gathered from the expression in the context, in which God is called *a terrible and mighty king above all the earth*. Therefore no doubt God's grace was commended with these titles to strengthen the minds of the godly in that intermediate time; in which not only the dignity of the people of Israel was decayed, but also they themselves, being oppressed with the bitterest reproach, could be refreshed with no taste of God's favour, unless it were by reclining on his promises alone. We know how long the interruption of this glorious power continued, even from the death of Solomon to the coming of Christ. This interval formed as it were a chasm which would have

swallowed up godly minds, if they had not been upheld by the word of God. Therefore as there was a handsel of this kingdom that is now spoken of, given by God under David, although there followed a sorrowful and almost shameful alteration within a while after, and then the most grievous disasters; and lastly, captivity and a most miserable dispersion, which differed little from utter destruction; the Holy Ghost hath exhorted the faithful to continue their joyfulness, until the Redeemer were come.

4 *He hath brought, &c.*] Others translate it, *He hath put nations in subjection, &c.* which agrees with this translation of mine. Somewhat more irrelevant is the translation of others, *He leadeth nations under us*; but utterly remote from the meaning of the prophet is the translation of others, who render יִדְבֵּר *to destroy*. For it is not to be doubted but that here is denoted a profitable, joyful, and desirable subjection. If any man had rather keep still the future tense of the verb, I object not. Still as it is certain that the grace of God to come, is commended under a shadow, I willingly embraced that which other translators have preferred. Moreover, although in this verse the prophet peculiarly exhorts his own countrymen to thankfulness, because through the grace of God they were sovereigns of all people, yet is it certain that those who were brought under the yoke of the Jews are associated with them in their joy. Therefore as much as the body differs from the shadow, so much difference was there between the feigned applause which the heathen nations gave to David in old time, and the joy wherewith the faithful receive Christ, because it flows from the willing obedience of the heart. And surely, if after the bringing of the ark into the temple, there had appeared none other sublimer truth, it had been but as a childish bauble to lodge up God in that narrow dwelling. But when that majesty that had dwelt in the tabernacle, was disclosed to the whole world, and all nations brought in subjection to it, then appeared this prerogative of the offspring of Abraham. Therefore in these words the prophet defines that kingdom of which he made mention; declaring the subjection of the Gentiles, that they should not refuse to obey the chosen people. For he treats not here of the secret providence whereby God governeth the whole world, but of his special power which he exercises by his word. Therefore that he may be properly called a king, it is needful that his own people acknowledge him to be so. Notwithstanding, it is demanded, since Christ hath restored his church under his own auspices and his heavenly power, in what sense it may be said that the nations are subject to the Jews; for we

know that the order of the church is not otherwise settled aright, unless there be only one head above all; and that all the faithful, from the highest to the lowest, hold themselves in the state of members; nay rather, when Christ spread his dominion over the whole world, the adoption which heretofore had been peculiar to one people, began to be common to all nations; and by this means was freedom given to all at once, that being knit together in brotherly love, they should all attain together to the heritage of heaven. But the solution is easy; at what time the church laid the yoke of the law upon the heathen, the Jews obtained the sovereignty. For like as pastors exercise jurisdiction of the Spirit by the word, so the church is called a queen and the mother of all the godly, Gal. iv. 26, because she is put in trust with the heavenly learning, which is as a sceptre to subdue us all. Therefore although the Jews, at such time as Christ's kingdom sprang up into light, were in miserable and opprobrious bondage to heathen nations, and were in a manner slaves to them; yet is the sovereignty truly and deservedly attributed to them, because God sent forth the rod of his power out of Sion. And inasmuch as they had the custody of the law, it belonged to their charge to bridle the Gentiles by the authority thereof. For the rest of the world was not otherwise gathered to the obedience of God, than when men were so renewed by the Spirit of God, that they yielded themselves of their own accord teachably and obediently to the Jews, and suffered them to rule them as their masters; according as is said in another place, *In that day seven men shall take hold of the skirt of one Jew, and shall say, We will walk after your God, &c.*; Zech. viii. 23.

5 *He hath chosen our, &c.*] The prophet sets forth more evidently the peculiar grace which God had vouchsafed to the chosen and holy seed of Abraham. For as, setting all the world aside, he had adopted to himself a few ignoble persons, so it behoved that so notable a pledge of his fatherly love should be distinguished from the universal beneficence wherewith he embraceth all mankind. Therefore the word *chosen* has a peculiar force in it, as if he should say, God hath not dealt with the children of Abraham as he is commonly wont to deal with other nations, but rather hath bestowed a peculiar dignity upon them, as it were by right of inheritance, wherein they excel all the residue; which he expresses immediately after under the name of *glory*. The prophet then bids them give God thanks for advancing his elect people to the highest degree of honour, in the person of Jacob, so that they may boast that their lot is distinguished from all others: and at the same time he teaches

that it came to pass by the free favour of God. For the pronoun relative *whom* is put instead of a part of speech that imports a cause; as though the prophet should impute the cause of their dignity and excellence to God himself. And this is to be held for a rule, that as often as God's favour towards the Jews is commended in that he loved their fathers, all their deservings are brought to nought. Now, if the whole worthiness of the holy patriarch hang upon the goodwill of God alone, who dares challenge any thing as belonging to himself? Let us learn then to ascribe to God's fatherly love whatsoever he bestoweth upon us peculiarly above others, because he hath chosen us to be his flock. Also we gather from this passage that the favour which God sheweth towards his chosen, pertaineth not universally to all men, but is a privilege whereby he separateth a few from the greater number.

6 God is gone up with triumph, the Lord *is gone up* with the sound of trumpets.

7 Sing unto God : sing, sing unto our King, sing.

8 For God is King of the whole earth : sing ye every one of you that hath understanding.

9 God hath obtained to reign over the heathen : God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.

10 The princes of nations are assembled together to the people of the God of Abraham : for the shields of the earth belong unto God : he is greatly exalted.

6 *God is gone up, &c.*] It is an allusion to the ancient ceremony of the law. For as the sounding of trumpets was wont to be used in solemnizing holy assemblies, the prophet says that God goeth up at such time as the trumpets encourage and hearten the people to extol his mightiness. For that implied as much in old time as if a king should go forth to his people with royal pomp, to make them hold him in reverence ; meanwhile there is no doubt that under that shadowy ceremony the prophet commended all other manner of going up ; that is, when Christ, mounting above all the heavens, got the dominion of the whole world, and arming himself with heavenly power, subdued all pride and loftiness. Moreover, you must call to remembrance that which I warned you of before, that is, that the name of *Jehovah* is given to the ark, because although God's essence or majesty was not enclosed in it, nor his power and operation restricted to it, yet was it no vain warrant of his presence. For like as God had promised that he would dwell in the midst of his

people, so long as the Jews worshipped him after the appointment of the law; so he shewed in very deed that he was present with them, and that he was not called upon in vain among them. This, however, agrees better with the manifestation of the glory which at length shone forth in the person of Christ. The effect is, that at such times as the trumpets were sounded among the Jews, according to the appointment of the law, that sounding vanished not away in the air, because God, who in the ark of the covenant had given a sign and pledge of his presence, was verily present in that assembly. Hence the prophet took his ground to exhort the faithful to sing unto God, because they would not do it blindly, like the superstitious, who having no certainty at all to lean upon, howl out in vain before their idols. The prophet therefore teaches that there is good reason why the faithful should sound out the praises of God cheerfully, inasmuch as they know certainly that he is as present with them as if he had placed his royal throne among them. Furthermore, after that he has called him the king of his chosen people, soon he says he is king of the whole earth, by means whereof he avouches the right and honour of primogeniture to the Jews, and afterwards joins the Gentiles in fellowship with them. And by these words the prophet intimates that God's kingdom shall be far more glorious at the coming of the Messiah than it was under the figures of the law, because it should be spread abroad unto the uttermost borders of the earth. Therefore, to express the greater earnestness, he repeats the word *sing* five times. In the word מִשְׁכִּיל there is an alteration of the number. For he exhorts all that have skill in singing to this exercise. But although he speak of the knowledge of music, yet he requires true understanding in singing of God's praises, that men's tongues should not roar only, as we know is done in popedom. Therefore to the lawful office of singing there is required knowledge, that the name of God be not profaned with empty noise.

9 *God hath obtained, &c.*] Because the word מִלֵּךְ under the time past denotes a continued act, therefore I have translated it *hath obtained to reign*. Moreover, seeing that the prophet so oftentimes repeats that God reigneth over the Gentiles, it is obvious to conclude that he speaks of a new manner of reigning not heretofore heard of. For there must be understood to be an antithesis between the time of the law when God restrained his dominion within the bounds of Judah, and the coming of Christ, when he enlarged it to the length and breadth of the world. Now, although the majesty of God exhibited some scintillations

among the Gentiles, when David made them tributary to him, yet could not the prophet have properly said that God had reigned among them, because they both disdained his service and also could have wished that the church had been altogether annihilated. Wherefore, that the fulfilment of this prophecy may be apparent, we must needs have recourse to Christ. What in the second member is added, *that God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness*, admits a twofold sense. For oftentimes by this expression is meant the tabernacle, or the temple, and now and then it signifies heaven also. If you like to expound it of the temple, the meaning will be, that God in suchwise reigneth over the whole world, and holdeth all people under his dominion, as that his chief seat continues nevertheless at Jerusalem; even as thence also flowed the doctrine of the Gospel, by which God hath subdued all people unto him. Notwithstanding, one may properly take it as spoken of heaven, that God, stretching out his hand to compel men to his obedience, sheweth openly that he reigneth over men from his heavenly throne, because unless he shew his power by immediate and evident signs, he is not acknowledged to be the governor of the world.

10 *The princes of nations, &c.*] He adorns and enlarges the last sentence with many words. For he defines again in what way God hath gotten himself dominion over the Gentiles, that is, by those who before were aliens coalescing in unity of faith with the Jews, and thus the sundry nations which were miserably scattered were gathered together again into one body. For when the doctrine of the Gospel shone forth, it led not the Jews away from the covenant that God had made with them, but rather it has joined us unto them. Then seeing that the calling of the Gentiles is nothing but the grafting of them into the stock of Abraham, the prophet with good reason says that the aliens were gathered together from all sides unto the chosen nation, that such an increase should spread abroad God's kingdom through all quarters of the earth. In which respect Paul says, Ephes. iii. 6, that the Gentiles were made one body with the Jews, that they might be partakers of the everlasting heritage. Now, although by the abolition of ceremonies the wall of partition which separated the one from the other be taken away, yet is it true that we are not otherwise accounted among God's children than because we are grafted into Abraham's stock. And the prophet speaks not only of the common sort, but also says that there shall be no better or readier way to the highest felicity, even for princes themselves, than to unite themselves to the Jews; according as we shall see it elsewhere

said of Sion, *This man and that man was born in her*: Ps. lxxxvii. 5. Moreover it is said that the gathering together shall be to the people of the God of Abraham, that we may know that there is no superiority according to the flesh given to the Jews, that may reside in their own persons, but that all their excellence depends upon this, that the pure worship of God flourishes, and the heavenly doctrine has pre-eminence among them. Wherefore this belongs not at all to the offcast Jews, whom their own unbelief has banished from the church. But because, as Paul teaches, Rom. xi. 16, where the root is holy, the branches are naturally holy also; the falling away of the greater part is no hindrance, but that the remnant should have their honour reserved to them. Therefore that desolation which, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, overflowed the whole earth, is called the people of the God of Abraham: Is. x. 23. This place contains a profitable doctrine, and that of two sorts. For, first, we learn hereby that as many as will be reckoned among the children of God, must seek to have a place in the church, that they may maintain brotherly unity with all the godly; and, secondly, that the unity of the church is not to be estimated otherwise than by unfeigned consent in yielding obedience to the word of God, that there may be but one sheepfold and one shepherd. Also they that excel in honour and riches in the world are warned to lay aside all pride, and willingly and submissively take upon them the common yoke, that they may yield themselves obedient children to the church. What follows, that *the shields of the earth belong unto God*, many understand of the princes of the earth. And I confess indeed that this metaphor is frequently met with in the scripture, and moreover it seems not to agree amiss with the context; as if the prophet had said, It is in God's hand to ingraft the great men of the world into his church, because he is Lord over them also. Notwithstanding, the simpler sense is, that forasmuch as the world is defended and preserved by God alone, men ought of right to look up with admiration at such loftiness, which is sufficient for so great a charge. For therefore puts he *shields* in the plural number, because God's manifold providence, as it were many shields, had need to step in among the sundry and almost innumerable perils that continually hang over all parts of the world.

PSALM XLVIII.

In this Psalm is celebrated some memorable deliverance of Jerusalem, at what time many kings had conspired the destruction of it. Now when the prophet, whosoever was the author, has given thanks unto God, he takes occasion therefrom to extol the happy state of that city with glorious encomiums, in that she hath God as the continual preserver of her welfare. For it had not been enough for the godly to perceive and acknowledge themselves once preserved by God's hand, unless they had been assured that the same God would also preserve them safe under his protection for the time to come, because he had adopted them for his peculiar people. Therefore the prophet stands chiefly upon this point, that God's sanctuary is not erected upon mount Sion for nought, but that his name is called upon there, that his power may appear visibly to the welfare of his people. Moreover, by the contents thereof one may gather, that this Psalm was made after David's death. I confess indeed, that certain foreign kings were deadly enemies to David, and that it was not owing to them that Jerusalem was not utterly destroyed, but yet we read not that they proceeded so far as to besiege it, so that God had need to work wonders to repress their efforts. Rather it is to be believed that here is denoted the time of king Achaz, when the siege was suddenly raised at the point of utter despair. Or else the time of Jehoshaphat and Asaph, for we know that at those times Jerusalem was not saved from utter destruction but by miraculous help from heaven. This is to be held for a certainty, that here is set forth to the faithful one specimen of God's favour, wherein they may acknowledge themselves to be well and happily dealt with, in that God had chosen himself a dwelling-place upon mount Sion, from whence to preside over their welfare.

[*A Song of praise to the sons of Korah.*]

1 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, and in the hill of his holiness.

2 Mount Sion at the sides of the north, fair in situation, is the joy of the whole earth, and the city of the great king.

3 God in the palaces thereof is known to be a defence.

1 *Great is the Lord.*] Before the prophet speaks of that special example of God's grace which I have touched upon, he teaches in general that Jerusalem is blessed, because God hath vouchsafed to take upon him the charge of defending it. And thus separates he God's church from all the world, even

as it is an inestimable benefit, that God embraceth with his fatherly love a small number out of all mankind. Although therefore his wisdom, goodness, and righteousness, shine forth in suchwise in the universal government of the world, that there is no part of it void from his praise, but matter of commendation meets us everywhere, yet here the prophet sets forth God's glory in defending his church. He says *he is great, and to be praised in his holy city*, and is he not so also in all the world? Truly, as I have said, there is no nook so secluded, to which his wisdom, righteousness, goodness, and all other his virtues pierce not; but because his will is to have them seen chiefly in his church, not without cause does he set the same before us as a mirror, in which God expresseth and representeth his face after a more lively manner. Furthermore, in naming it his *holy hill*, he briefly puts us in mind, by what right Jerusalem is the city of God; namely, because the ark of the covenant was placed there by the appointment of the law; as if he should say that Jerusalem is not for her own desert the lofty theatre on which God will have his greatness beheld, but because the ark of the covenant was set there, by commandment from heaven, in assurance of his singular favour.

2 *Mount Sion at the sides, &c.*] For a confirmation of the former sentence, he commends the gifts in which mount Sion excelled at that time, because that in them God's glory, of which I spoke just now, was to be seen. Now although this goodliness of situation, which the prophet recounts in the first place, was natural; yet he means that even in the very exterior of the city, there were marks of God's favour engraven from the beginning, so that the very sight of it shewed the place to have been especially garnished by God, to the end it should in time to come be hallowed to such a purpose. Howbeit I think it not to be called a fair place simply in respect that it had not its parallel in Judah, for it is well known that there were other cities nothing inferior to Jerusalem, as well in fruitfulness as in pleasant prospect and other advantages. But, in my judgment, jointly with the situation, he comprehends the adventitious glory which owed its existence to the temple. Therefore, when we hear the beauty of the city praised, let us call to mind that spiritual grace which, according to the prophecy of the continual abiding of the ark, was added to the natural beauty of the place. The interpreters agree not about the word *גִּבְעָה*. Some take it for a lifting up, as if it had been said that Jerusalem had been situated in a high and lofty place. Others translate it a *climate*, because the Hebrews by a metaphor call climates *branches*, because they are spread

out in length. For myself, I was unwilling to be so very particular in a matter of no greater weight, and therefore have merely selected that which seemed most likely ; namely, that that country was above others pleasant and goodly to behold. But there is a doubt whether he set it down as a commendation of mount Sion, that it lay towards the north, or whether it should be resolved thus ; Although mount Sion lie toward the north, yet does that abate nothing of goodliness. Still the former seems to be the more natural sense. For with the selfsame encomium does Isaiah commend this mountain, meaning to denote the excellence thereof. For thus speaks he in the person of Sennacherib, xiv. 14; *I will climb above the height of the clouds, and will sit upon the hill of witness, in the sides of the north*. Afterwards he terms it *the joy of the whole earth*, not only because that region was healthful by reason of the temperateness of the air, as the Jews insipidly prattle, or because it brought forth sweet and excellent fruits, which might yield delight to foreign nations, which is also senseless invention, but because from thence should spring salvation unto the whole world, according as all nations borrowed the light of life and assurance of heavenly grace from thence. For if men rejoice without God, the end of it after all is destruction, and their laughter is turned into gnashing of teeth. But Christ appeared with his Gospel out of Sion, to shed substantial gladness and endless felicity upon the whole world. Although then in the prophet's days the knowledge of the Gospel was not yet spread abroad to foreigners, yet did he rightly use this manner of speaking, that the Jews might know that blessedness was not to be sought elsewhere than in the free covenant of God, which was bestowed in that holy place. Meanwhile also he foretold that which was fulfilled at length in the last time at Christ's coming. And hereby we may learn, that God's favour alone is fully sufficient to cheer the hearts of the godly, in like manner as if that be withdrawn, all mortal men must needs be wrung with miserable quietness and sorrow. That which is added immediately after concerning the *city of the great king* tends to this end, that mount Sion is not only holy itself, but also endowed with so great a privilege, that it makes the whole city holy, because God had chosen his seat there to reign over all people. In the third verse, where he says that *God is known in the palaces of Jerusalem*, he commends again the dignity thereof in respect of the defence of God, even as we have seen in Psalm xli. 6, *God is in the midst of it, therefore shall it not be moved*. And he named palaces expressly, for the sake of the contrast, that the Jews

might know that although the holy city were fortified with strong towers, and had houses beautiful and like bulwarks, yet the safety of it was alone the defence of God. The faithful therefore are warned by these words, that although they dwell in strong-holds and palaces, they must look well about them, that that gorgeousness or that loftiness put not out of sight God's power, even as worldly men, contenting themselves with earthly helps, account it nought worth to have God to be their keeper. Moreover because this perverseness is bred in us by nature, that worldly wealth should dazzle our eyes, and bring upon us forgetfulness of God, we must with singular heed mind this doctrine, that nothing which seems worthy estimation in us, may dim the knowledge of God's power and grace, but that in all gifts wherewith we shall be garnished, God's glory may evermore shine clearly forth, so that we may believe ourselves to be happy nowhere but in him.

4 For behold, kings are gathered together, and are passed by together.

5 They have seen, so have they wondered and trembled, and been driven headlong.

6 Fearfulness hath caught hold of them, and sorrow is come upon them as upon a woman labouring of child.

7 With an eastern wind shalt thou break the ships of Tarsus.

4 *For behold, kings, &c.*] Here is touched upon that special deliverance which I spoke of. For the prophet reports that when kings were gathered together to destroy Jerusalem, yet their rage passed away in vain, as clouds are wont to vanish; yea rather, he says that they were destroyed with a look only, and that not after an ordinary manner, but like a woman that is overcome with sudden throes in time of her travail. Now although it be not known for a certainty what story the prophet makes mention of, yet the things that are spoken here agree most fitly as well with the time of Achaz as to the times of Hezekiah or Asa; for it was a wonderful work of God, that when the two most puissant kings of Syria and Israel, furnished with a mighty host, had smitten the city with such fear that the king and his people lay almost for dead, they should suddenly be disheartened, yea and disappointed of their certain hope of winning the city; whereupon Isaiah, vii. 4, in jest, terms them *smoking*

firebrands, because they were as it were two torches kindled to consume Judah with fire. And no less stupendous a miracle was it, that the innumerable host of Sennacherib was in one night destroyed by an angel without the hand of man, 2 Kings xix. 35. Furthermore, at what time the king of Ethiopia came with ten hundred thousand men to besiege Jerusalem, it was a singular proof of God's power to overthrow so great a host. But whatsoever it was, he says that the Jews found, by manifest experience, that God was the keeper of their city, when he set himself against the invincible power of their enemies. Therefore he says that kings assembled together, by which saying he means that there was a league made for the destruction of the church. The words *passed by*, may be expounded two ways, either that the armies which they had gathered were brought to nought, or else that they entered on the expedition together as it were in battle array with one consent. And this second seems to suit the text best, because it follows afterwards, that they stood astonished at the sight of the city; though one might without impropriety take this verse as added in the way of amplification. But, forasmuch as it makes not so greatly to the effect of the matter, let the readers choose which pleases them best. Now when he says, that when they saw the city, they wondered, trembled, were driven headlong, and overtaken with sorrow, as it were at some sudden mischief, he adorns the miracle that God wrought in destroying so great furniture, with as many titles of commendation as he can. For the sentence must be construed thus; As soon as they saw the city they wondered. This saying of Cæsar's, "I came, I saw, I won," whereby he noted his facility in conquering Egypt, is well known. The prophet contrariwise in this place says, that the wicked were amazed at the sight alone of the city; as if God had dimmed their eyes with the brightness of his glory. And the particle *כִּי* is put in a borrowed sense, as it were to point out the matter with one's finger, like as also a little after follows the adverb of place *שָׁם* in the same sense. The similitude of the woman travailing of child, tends to express the sudden change. For by this circumstance the grace of God shone forth more brightly, because they were so smitten with unlooked-for fear, that they were suddenly disheartened, and were thrown down headlong from their reckless pride. And we are warned in this place, that there happens no strange thing at this day, if the church be assaulted with powerful hosts and sustain dreadful assaults, for God hath been wont to humble his servants in suchwise from the beginning, to make his wonderful power more apparent to the world. By the way

let us bear in mind, that God's nod alone sufficeth to deliver us, and howsoever our enemies hem us in on all sides to destroy us, it lieth in his power, as often as he list, to strike their minds with amazement, so that they may perish in a moment, even in the midst of all their practices. And let this thought hold our minds as it were with a bridle, that they gaze not about hither and thither for worldly helps.

7 *With an eastern wind, &c.*] Although the interpreters expound this place diversely, yet let us content ourselves with the natural sense; namely, that the enemies of the church were afflicted and drowned in destruction, even as God by his storms sinketh the ships of Cilicia into the deep sea. And he rehearses God's power, which is wont to shew itself in great and violent tempests; as if he should say, It is no marvel if God, who breaketh strong ships by force of the winds, have also overthrown his enemies that were puffed up with confidence of their own strength. By the sea of Tarsus the Hebrews mean the Mediterranean sea, by reason of Cilicia, which, by the testimony of Josephus, was called in the old time Tarsus, although in process of time that name was restrained to this one city. And because the chief traffick of the Jews was into Cilicia, by the figure synecdoche they attribute that to this country alone which was common to other countries that were further off and less known.

8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God shall establish it for evermore. Selah.

9 LORD, we have waited for thy mercy in the midst of thy temple.

10 Like as thy name is, O God, so is thy praise upon the uttermost coasts of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness.

8 *As we have heard, &c.*] This passage will bear a twofold sense. The first is, that the prophet should in the person of the faithful say, that such as God had shewn himself in old time in delivering the fathers, the same hath he now also towards their children and posterity. For they had heard by the report of their fathers, and they had learned by the sacred stories, how mercifully and fatherly God had helped his church; and now they avouch themselves to have seen as much with their eyes, because they had found the same mercy towards themselves by experience. The effect therefore is, that the faithful not only

have record of God's goodness and power in histories, but also that they feel it by use and experience, yea, and see the thing with their eyes which they knew of before by hearsay, and by the report of their fathers, and therefore that God continueth always like himself, confirming the ancient examples of his grace with incessant experiences. The other sense is somewhat more subtle, though it suits very well; namely, that God had performed in very deed the thing that he had promised to his people; as if the faithful should say, that the thing which they had but heard of before by report, was now performed before their eyes; because as long as only bare promises appear, God's grace and safe-keeping are hidden in hope; but when they are brought to pass, then they are made apparent to the eye. If this interpretation be liked, it contains a rich doctrine; namely, that God disappointeth not the hope that is reposed in his word, and that he is not wont to be more lavish in promising than faithful in performing. When it is said *in the city*, the letter **כ** is taken for **נ** or **ה**; that is to say, for *concerning the city*, or *as touching the city*. For the prophet purposed not to say it was declared to the faithful at Jerusalem, that God would succour his servants; but that God had from the beginning been a faithful keeper of the city, and ever would be. And mention is made of the city of God by name, because he promises not the same safe-keeping to all people indifferently, but to his chosen and peculiar people. The name of *Lord* is put to express God's power. But soon after, the faithful add *that he is their God*, to denote their adoption, that they may presume to trust in him and to flee familiarly to him. Now whereas in the second council of Nice the good fathers wrested this passage to prove that teaching in churches was not sufficient, unless pictures and images were added to confirm it withal, it was too shameful a dotage, and unworthy of being mentioned, except that it is profitable for us to understand how they who went about to infect God's church with that corruption, were stricken with the spirit of giddiness and insensibility. The closing of the verse distinguishes Jerusalem from all cities of the world which are obnoxious to vicissitudes, so that they flourish but for a time. But inasmuch as the state of Jerusalem is founded by God, it abides steadfast among the sundry revolutions of the world. No marvel, therefore, if God continually from age to age maintain the city that he hath chosen, in which it is his will to have the invocation of his name to remain for ever. And whereas the city was once destroyed, and the people led into captivity, it militates not against this exposition. For the

restoration thereof was already foreshewn by the prophecy of Jeremiah, xxvii. 22. And therefore even then most of all did God shew how steadfast his work was. And now, after that Christ hath by his coming renewed the world, whatsoever was spoken of that city in old time pertains to the spiritual Jerusalem, which is dispersed through all quarters of the world. And as often as our minds waver, we must call to remembrance this doctrine, that whatsoever danger hang over us, the welfare of the church, which God hath established, may indeed be sore shaken, but yet not so enfeebled that it should fall. Moreover the verb of the future tense may be turned into the preter tense, but without altering the sense.

9 *Lord, we have waited, &c.*] This verse teaches that the faithful were preserved by the power of God, because even in the utmost confusion of all things, they acquiesced patiently until God at length pitying them sent them help. For the word דָּמָם, which properly signifies to be still, or to hold one's peace, denotes calmness of mind, whereby we gather that the faithful were harassed with troubles, so that according to the fleshly sense they might have been abashed, or confounded with fear: according as we know that men are in continual unquietness, and tossed to and fro as it were with contrary waves, until faith calm their minds and compose them to stillness. The effect therefore is, that although the faithful were piteously afflicted, yet were they not so cast down from their standing, that they leaned not on God's help; or rather opened themselves the gate of his grace, by their patience and hope. Furthermore, it made greatly to the setting forth of God's grace, that when they depended upon the expectation of his help they were not disappointed. Whereby also may be gathered a profitable lesson, that God's help is withdrawn from us because we distrust his promises, and through our own unquietness suffer not the grace to flow unto us, which is laid up for those that are still. But what means he by *in the midst of the temple*? that the faithful fostered their faith there only, and that each man ceased to hope as soon as he was come home again to his own house? Yea, it is certain that they carried home with them the hope that they had conceived in the temple, that they might stand steadfastly in it. But as God had promised that that place in which he would be called upon, should be the seat and dwelling-place of his might and grace; the faithful here say, that, in reliance on that assurance, they doubted not but God would shew himself merciful and favourable, because they had an assured pledge of his presence. For it becomes not us to imagine of our own

head that he will be our deliverer, further than as he offereth himself to us of his own accord. Now if that shadowy symbol of God's presence under the law ought to carry such force with it, that the faithful might hope for life in the midst of death, then is there just cause that we should be quiet, yea, though the world should be turned upside down, seeing that Christ is descended unto us, to join us much more fully unto his father. Only we must endeavour that the worship of God may continue pure and entire among us, that his temple may shine forth in the midst of us.

10 *Like as thy name is, &c.*] Some connect this verse with the last sentence, as if it had been said, Lord, thou wilt not that thy name should be proclaimed in vain, for therewithal thou ministerest matter of praise. And so the sense will be, that God's name is proclaimed together with effect, or that his power shews itself together with his promises. Some expound it somewhat more subtly, that God's works are answerable to his renown, because he is called **YH** from his power, when he shews in very deed that this name is not attributed to him in vain, but that the praise that is given him is rightful and due. The former exposition, as it is less constrained, so it approaches nearer to the words and meaning of the prophet, that is, that God avoucheth by his deeds that the Jews worship him not in vain as the true and only God. But when I weigh the portion that follows, that is to say, *upon the uttermost coasts of the earth*, I think the prophet meant another thing; namely, that whithersoever the fame of God's name comes men shall know that he is worthy of most high praise. For in these words there is a tacit antithesis. We know that the names of idols in those days had been bandied about through the whole world; and yet that although those counterfeit gods were famous, they were destitute of genuine glory, because there was manifested in them no token of divinity. But the prophet in this place says on the contrary, Lord, wheresoever thy name is heard of, it shall be joined with substantial praise, or, it will always bring forth with itself matter of praise; for all the world shall understand how thou hast shewn thyself towards thy chosen people. To the same purpose pertains that which is added by and by, *that God's right hand is full of righteousness*; that is, that in helping his servants, he sheweth his righteousness openly, as it were by reaching forth his hand; and that he giveth not one specimen or two of his righteousness, but that he fulfilleth it in all points. Moreover, it is to be remembered here, what we have spoken elsewhere, that God's righteousness is taken for his faithfulness, which he displayeth

in defending those that are his, whereby there redounds to us inestimable comfort, that he will shew himself righteous in caring for our welfare. Now we understand the prophet's mind, that is, that the names of false gods are in all men's mouths without matter of true praise; but that the case stands otherwise with the God of Israel, for whithersoever the report of him is brought, all men shall understand him to be such a deliverer of his people, as disappointeth not the hope and desires of his servants, nor forsaketh them in danger.

11 Mount Sion shall rejoice, the daughters of Judah shall leap for joy, for thy judgments' sake.

12 Encompass ye Sion, and walk about it, and number the towers of it.

13 Mark well the walls thereof, exalt her towers; that ye may make report to the generation that cometh after you.

14 For this God is our God for ever and ever; he shall be our guide even unto the death.

11 *Mount Sion shall, &c.*] Now he finishes his rejoicing, that Jerusalem and the other cities of Judah shall have cause to commend God's righteousness, because they have felt him indeed to be the maintainer of their welfare. For the word *judgment* is put for this purpose, that God taking upon him the cause of his church, hath professed himself an enemy to those that oppress it, so that he will subdue their fierceness. Afterwards again the prophet commends the situation and beauty of Jerusalem, as if he should say it were a city excellently fortified and impregnable; because God's blessing shone forth in some respect in these outward marks: although we must bear in mind that which he said erewhile, that God is seen to be a defence in the palaces thereof. For his meaning in making mention of the *towers* and *walls* is not that the minds of the godly should linger in those things, but rather he sets forth a mirror that may represent God's face. Therefore says he, *Encompass ye Sion*, that is to say, look about it advisedly; *Number ye her towers, and give your attention to consider her walls*; esteem her palaces according to their worthiness, and so shall ye easily perceive it to be a city chosen of God, because it far surpasses all other cities. For all his endeavour is to make it appear what the quality and character was wherewith the Lord endued Jerusalem, in exalting it to be a sanctuary for himself, and a dwelling-place for his people. But the prophet

in noting the end, namely, that the beauty and gloriousness of the holy city should be declared to them that come after, seems to give a secret inkling, that the time will one day come that it may not be seen any more; for to what purpose should making report serve in a thing that is manifest and which lies before one's eyes? Therefore although he said a little before, that that city is established for ever, yet now by way of correction he declares what manner of everlastingness it shall be; namely, such as shall endure but to the renewing of the church. For we are that posterity to which the said declaration is directed; because what benefits soever God bestowed upon the people of old time, are ours as well as theirs. Not that that outward gloriousness in which Jerusalem was wonderful is conspicuous among us at this day, but because the church has been no less gloriously adorned with spiritual gifts since the coming of Christ, than Jerusalem was garnished with walls and towers in old time under the shadows of the law. I have translated the word פָּסַח *exalt*, referring it to the consideration of her excellence. For when others expound it *strengthen ye*, it seems not so suitable. And if any one prefer the translation of others, *behold, view, or look upon*, I make no objection.

14 *For this God is our, &c.*] Hereby it appears better that the prophet spoke not of the palaces of Jerusalem, that the godly should stand staring upon them; but that they should lift up themselves to behold the glory of God. For whithersoever they turned themselves, God willed that the marks of his grace should be seen engraven, or rather that he should be known to be as it were present. Whereby we gather that whatsoever dignity or excellence shine in the church, they ought only to be contemplated in such sort that God may come to our remembrance and be praised in his gifts. Moreover, the pronoun demonstrative הַזֶּה, *this*, is not superfluous, but with a definiteness of expression distinguishes the only one God from all the counterfeit and forged gods. For how boldly soever the unbelievers have the name of God in their mouths, and prate about religion, yet if a man search them somewhat narrowly, he will find there is no certainty nor substance in them. Yea rather, whosoever they be that are not grounded in the true faith, they must needs come to nought in their own imaginations. It is therefore the property of faith to set before us a distinct knowledge of God, wherein we may not waver; like as contrariwise superstition is for ever introducing fantastical and manifold gods. Wherefore so much the more is that forcible pointing out to be noted, to which that of Isaiah,

xxv. 9, is very similar; *Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him; and he shall save us; This is the Lord, we have waited for him;* as if the faithful should protest that they have not an uncertain God, or such a one as they have only a confused and faint apprehension of; but such a one as they know for a certainty, and are well assured of. And the faithful protest that God will always be steadfast in preserving the church, in order to encourage and strengthen themselves to proceed in an uniform course of faith. The member that follows next, that is, *he shall be our guide even unto the death*, seems to be a sort of exposition. For by this saying, the faithful warrant themselves that he will be their guide and their keeper for evermore. And yet they mean not that they shall be safe under God's governance in this life only, and be forsaken in the midst of death; but they denote after a gross manner what I spoke of; namely, that as many as lean unto God, are regarded of him even to the end. If any man choose to read עֲלֵמֹת conjointly, so that it may be a single word, and to take it for *a world* or *an age*, the sense will be the same. Others translate it *childhood*, in this sense; like as God hath from the first, begun to cherish his church after the same manner that a father brings up his sons from their childhood, so will he proceed in the same course. But in my judgment, the first sense flows more aptly. As far from the purpose, others translate it *in secret*. Unless perhaps the prophet should mean to say openly that God's governance is hidden, that we should value it, not according to fleshly understanding, but by faith.

PSALM XLIX.

Because it happens for the most part that ungodly persons, or such as are given to earthly pleasures, live prosperously and happily, and that the true worshippers of God are either distressed with adversity, or else languish under their miseries; lest the former sort should run to excess of pride in their prosperity, or the other sort be disheartened, the prophet teaches that although the heathenish swim in all prosperity to their hearts' content, yet as long as they are strangers from God, their shadowy felicity wherein they sooth themselves, and which vanishes away like a dream, is in nowise to be coveted; and that the good, although they are spitefully and reproachfully handled, or afflicted with many miseries, are notwithstanding regarded of God, so that he delivereth them in the end.

[*A Song to the chief of the sons of Korah.*]

2 Hear this, all people; hearken, all ye that dwell in the world:

3 As well ye sons of Adam, as ye sons of man, both rich and poor.

4 My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and my heart shall muse of understanding.

5 I will incline mine ear to the parable; and I will open my riddle upon the harp.

2 *Hear this, all people, &c.*] Forasmuch as this Psalm, whosoever was the author thereof, contains one of the chief points of heavenly philosophy; the author has good reason to premise in attractive terms that he will speak of great and secret matters, that he may procure attention. Some would perchance think at the first blush that it is but a common matter that is treated of here, because he discourses of the shortness of life, and of the foolish confidence with which the generality of men intoxicate themselves, both which points seem sufficiently known. But his drift is, that good and godly disposed persons that enjoy but little prosperity or none in the world, should mitigate their sorrow and assuage their weariness with this comfort, that it shall be better with them in the end, when God shall restore to order the confusion that exists. But the prophet mounts yet higher: that howsoever God shew not openly and immediately that the world is ruled by his providence, yet

must they patiently wait for the end, which is not perceived by the understanding of the flesh. This even the philosophers also teach, that although we are miserably vexed in the world, yet must we not yield to any afflictions; and moreover that they are in a fool's paradise that are ordinarily accounted happy, because nothing is more transitory than riches, honours, and delights. But they come not to the real source of the matter; because when they dispute most excellently of a happy life, content with virtue alone, they do not set God before their eyes as the disposer of human affairs, so that those who can see nothing but despair without him, may learn to lean upon him. The precepts of philosophy therefore give but cold comfort in these matters. And therefore it is that the Holy Ghost, although he bring forth such things as are known by experience, yet afterwards mounteth up higher, proclaiming that the world is ruled by God's providence, and that while the wicked vaunt themselves without measure, and the good are trodden spitefully under foot, God sitteth evermore in heaven as a judge, to banish from the reprobates at the proper time the delights with which they please themselves, but to rescue his own, that worship him, out of deep darkness, and replenish them with true joy. Hence assuredly is to be sought substantial consolation in all miseries, which would overwhelm us with the terrors in which they appear, if God's countenance should not shine upon us. For except we believe that he careth for our welfare, we see no remedy nor end. This, as I said, is the reason why the prophet bids us lift up our minds and desires more earnestly to his doctrine, because he intends to speak of notable and high matters. Notwithstanding, two things are noted in this verse; that is, that the benefit of the doctrine which he sets forth, is common to all men; and also, that all men have need of earnest warning; because no man lifts up his mind to consider things aright, except he be awakened. Whereas I have translated, *ye that dwell in the world*, some translate it, *ye inhabitants of the time*; which though it agree not amiss with the present matter, yet is somewhat of the harshest. Let it suffice us that the prophet calls all men without exception, because what he is about to speak of, pertains alike to all men. By *the sons of Adam*, he means the common and lower sort, and by *the sons of man*, the elders and nobles, or such as are raised above their fellows by some dignity. He begins by saying then, that from the highest to the lowest, all without exception must be taught by him, because not one of them is wise of himself, when notwithstanding he purposes to utter a doctrine that touches all mankind alike.

4 *My mouth shall speak, &c.*] Justly does the prophet commend his doctrine with these titles of commendation. For although he afterwards reprove men's folly by experience, yet the principle of his teaching which he will adopt falls not under the cognisance of ordinary intelligence. Howbeit, he uses this preface not only to defend his doctrine from contempt, but also to quicken minds benumbed with sleep. And that he may do that the more effectually, he not only exhorts others to the desire of learning, but also professes to give heed with them himself. And by this means he makes himself one of the scholars, who in executing the duty of a teacher, covets to profit himself also. And surely all God's prophets ought to be so minded as that they may willingly have God the instructor of themselves as well as of the rest of the people, and to be the first that give ear to his message, which they convey by their own mouth to others. Furthermore, the purpose of the prophet was to claim authority and reverence for his doctrine, because he babbles not inconsiderately of matters which he has devised himself, but only utters that which he had learned in God's school. And the one only way to teach well in God's church is, that he who is made a master to teach others should first bow down his own ear to learn, before he open his mouth to speak; and so deliver faithfully from hand to hand that which he has received of the Lord. And doubtless, wisdom springs not up in the natural disposition of man, but must be sought from heaven, and therefore no man can ever speak wisely and skilfully to the edifying of the church, who has not first yielded himself to be taught of God. As to the words, in the fourth verse some translate it, *and the musing of my heart shall speak understandings*. But because it were an improper and harsh manner of speech to say that the musing of the heart speaketh, I have followed that which is more simple. In the fifth verse the word מִשַּׁל, which I have translated *a parable*, signifies properly a similitude, but it is often referred to grave sentences, because they most commonly are garnished with figures and borrowed expressions. In the same sense almost is the noun חִידָה taken, which they translate *a riddle*, and therefore in Ezekiel, xvii. 2, the two verbs and the nouns are joined together, חִידָה וּמִשַּׁל, that is to say, *Riddle thou in riddle, and parable thou in parable*. I confess indeed that in that place is denoted an allegorical narrative. But I have told you already why the Hebrews call sentences that are excellent and worthy to be marked by the name of riddles and similitudes. For by the word *open*, or *disclose*, the prophet testifies that it is no part of

his purpose to wrap the things he will treat of in perplexed and dark equivocations. And surely, although the heavenly doctrine be far above the reach of our understanding, by reason of its sublimity, yet the Holy Ghost hath so tempered his oracles to our capacity, that the whole scripture is profitable to our edification. In vain, therefore, is the pretence of ignorance caught at by many; for there is nothing so high or so hard which is not laid open to the rude and unlettered. Whereas many interpreters suppose that mention is made of the *harp*, that the sweetness and charm of singing might mitigate any harshness there might be, I am not certain whether the notion is well supported. It suffices me that the prophet spoke after the ordinary manner, because it was a customary thing in those days to sing Psalms to the harp.

6 Why shall I fear in the days of evil? the wickedness of my heel shall compass me about.

7 They trust upon their wealthiness, and make boast of the multitude of their riches.

8 The brother shall not redeem by redeeming: no man shall give unto God the price of his ransom.

9 And precious shall the ransom of the soul of them be, and the continuance of them for evermore.

10 That he may live still for ever, and not see the grave.

6 *Why shall I fear, &c.*] Now the prophet begins to treat of the doctrine itself, namely, that the children of God ought not to be disquieted overmuch at adversity, although the ungodly press upon them with froward insolence, and keep them in on every side at their pleasure; and that, because the Lord, although he dissemble and sit still, yet sleepeth not in heaven, but delayeth and suspendeth his judgments till the fitting time. Moreover, the interrogation is more forcible than if he should simply assert that he will be of a contented and quiet mind in adversity. In the second part of the verse he especially points out the afflictions that have extraordinary bitterness in them, and which wound men's minds more grievously; namely, when the wicked bear sway, and exercise their violence without controlment. Therefore the adverb of time is to be supplied thus, *when the wickedness, &c.* There are some interpreters that deduce another sense: If I shall be afraid in the days of adversity, and provide for myself over-anxiously, as the unbelievers are wont to do; as soon as I shall come to death,

mine own wickedness will hold me as one besieged. And so they take *the heel* for the end of life. But I reject all this as too far-fetched. Neither do I see with what reason others refer it to the thoughts; for I think there cannot be found any example of this metaphor elsewhere. With more appearance of truth others translate it *liers in wait*, because the word *לכוד* signifies to deceive: as if the prophet had said; Although false-hearted and crafty persons lay wait for me, yet is there no reason why I should be afraid. But I had rather understand it without a figure; When the wickedness of mine enemies shall besiege me, pressing upon me to trip up my heels; according as they say in French, *poursuivre jusqu' aux talons*. I confess he speaks of his enemies, but he says that their wrongful persecutions hang upon his heels, because they overmatch him in strength, and, as it were, pressing his heels with the foot, are close upon him to overthrow him.

7 *They trust upon, &c.*] Now follows the reason why the children of God ought not to be dismayed in adversity, and much less to faint, even when they seem to be fast bound under the hand of their enemies, so that they cannot escape their violence and crafts; namely, because they are puffed up in vain with a shadowy power, which soon vanishes away. The prophet then reasons in this wise; that when we fear men we are troubled with vain and delusive apprehension, because we consider not what the state of them is, just as if a man should be afraid of a shadow or of a ghost. They boast, says he, in *the multitude of their riches*; and we like fools are haled away into the same error, because we consider not how transitory and of how short continuance the state of this earthly life is. The prophet, however, looks yet deeper into the matter. For he not only shews from the thing itself that they are falsely accounted blessed who excel in pleasures, or wealth, or honour, in this world, but also he proves them even by their own understanding, or rather dulness, to be miserable. For inasmuch as happiness consists in the feeling of him that enjoys it, no man can account fools and dotards happy, because they want understanding. Now the prophet shews that wicked men are beside themselves, because it is an assured sign of madness to trust in a man's own wealthiness, and to boast of his riches, as is the case when foolish men see not the thing that is set before their eyes. For they find by daily proof that no man can redeem another man's life with any money: whence it follows that they are no less out of their wits than frantic persons. If any man like better to translate it thus, *Man shall not by ransoming redeem his brother*, the sense will

remain the same, and the Hebrew phrase will bear it. There are that take **אֶחָד** for *one*, which, though I reject not, yet it seems not to suit so well. What is said afterwards, That no man has the price to pay to God for the ransom of another man, pertains to this purpose, that the life of all men is in the hand and at the pleasure of God alone, and cannot be compounded for by any bargain, that the time should be prolonged whenever it is God's pleasure to call away this man or that man. The same sentiment he confirms in the verse following, That their ransom is precious, or costly. For he means not only that it is rare, but that it can nowhere be found; as in the first book of Samuel, iii. 1, it is said that in the time of Eli the high priest's answers from God were rare, because visions had ceased in those days. The effect then is, that there can no ransom be found among men wherewith to purchase eternity in this world, either for themselves or for others. I have translated it, *and the continuance of them for evermore*, but others take the word **אֶחָד** to be a verb, and expound it *to cease*; as if the prophet should say, There can be no ransom so great as to be effectual; therefore it shall cease for evermore, because it shall never take effect. But because the noun **אֶחָד**, as we have seen in Ps. xxxix. 5, signifies a predetermined time of life, it seemed to me that the former interpretation is the more natural. Whereas in the tenth verse it is said *That he may live still*, the prophet expresses more plainly that not only men cannot be ransomed when they are once dead, but also that their life cannot be protracted any longer while they are yet alive in the world. For he teaches that every man has an end of life appointed beforehand, which he cannot pass beyond; and therefore that when worldly men play the fool in their perverse confidence, they are on the brink of their grave, from which it shall be in vain for them to try to exempt themselves. Now although the prophet seem not to speak in riddles, when he discusses the matter in a subdued and lowly style, adapted to popular apprehension, yet as he condemns here the insensibility of men as it were from the high throne of God, because being blinded with pride they forget that they are men, whosoever looks thoroughly into the matter, will confess that the things here propounded are enigmas. In the mean time, the said opening whereof he made mention is to be seen in the words, for God meaneth to deliver a clearly expressed doctrine, that cannot escape the knowledge even of the rudest and most unlearned.

11 For he shall see how wise men die, the fool and

the unwise man shall perish together, and leave their wealth unto strangers.

12 Yet think they that their house shall stand for ever, and their habitation shall continue from age to age : they have called their own names upon lands.

13 And man shall not continue in honour ; he is become like unto the beasts, they perish.

11 *For he shall see how, &c.*] I read the ninth and tenth verses jointly, because it is the prophet's purpose to shew how great their stupidity is who imagine that they shall live for ever in this world, and bestow all their endeavours to build themselves an everlasting dwelling-place upon earth, when notwithstanding they see continually how all men pass away. It is said in a common proverb that 'experience is the instructress of fools ;' then are they more than fools who are convicted by so many and so evident examples, and yet do not renounce their error so as to remember that they are born to die. The words of the prophet therefore are connected in this wise ; Although these blind despisers of God see that death is common to all men, and that wise men die as well as fools, yet cease they not to imagine that they shall dwell upon the earth for ever : for they frame their life as if they should never change their home. Every one of them therefore sees what happens to others, that is, that all without distinction are involved in one destruction, though their state were different upon earth ; nay rather, they see the wealth of many men transferred to strangers. For although אחרים, which simply signifies as well *others* as *strangers*, may be extended to any successors, yet I suppose it to be contrasted with a man's lawful or own heirs. For if a man leave a heir of his own begetting, he seems after a sort to remain alive still in his person. But when a man dies childless, the name of him is utterly extinguished ; and so worldlings have the less comfort, because their children succeed not in their room to maintain their person. And yet they profit so little or nothing by these experiences, that their mind runs upon nothing so much as upon living always on earth. For the word קרב, as it signifies the midst of anything, is metaphorically taken for the heart or bowels of a man. The meaning therefore is clear ; namely, that the imaginary endlessness of the earthly life possesses their inward senses. There is alleged by others a more refined interpretation. For as קרב is taken now and then for a grave, they think that the folly of such as build royal palaces with great cost, for their memorial to dwell in after

their death, is derided; but this is a very nerveless invention. And that which follows immediately after confirms better the former sense; namely, that these men who are given altogether to the world, *call their own names upon lands*; that is to say, apply themselves with might and main to win renown among mortal men. Their desires ought to tend to this end, that their names may be written in the book of life, and be blessed before God and his angels; but now they foolishly give themselves up to the contrary affection, that they may be famous upon earth, and their names may resound loudly. For by the word *call*, the prophet glances at the empty sound wherewith worldly men are advanced. Some like better another sense; that is, that *they have called countries after their own names*, that they might leave a monument of their glory to their posterity. But I have no doubt that the prophet's meaning is this, that they take great pains to purchase themselves a famous name upon earth.

13 *And man shall not, &c.*] After he has derided the insane thoughts with which the unbelievers wilfully beguile themselves, he adds that although they stand so much in their own conceits, yet shall they shortly come to the same end with brute beasts. For although in respect of the mind, there is a great difference between man and brute beasts; yet, in speaking of the state of this present life, the prophet does right to say that the unbelievers shall die like beasts. For he need not dispute of the life to come, because he had to deal with the children of this world, who pierce not to the hope thereof, nor conceive of any other felicity than that which they enjoy at present. Therefore in mockery of their folly, You, says he, as though you were exempted from the common lot of men, lift up your horns above the clouds; but death presses hard at your heels, which shall bring to nought that pride of yours, so that there may be no difference between you and asses or dogs. For I approve not of the idle subtleties of some interpreters, who suppose that men become like unto beasts because they understand not to what excellence they were created, that is, when God gave them a soul which shall never sleep or die. For the meaning of the prophet is evident enough, that worldlings flatter themselves in vain in regard to transitory life, because destruction shall light upon them by and by, and gather them to the herd of brute beasts. And in the last word the prophet explains himself fully why he likens earthly men to brute beasts; namely, because they are cut off, or perish. Some supply the relative *אשר*, *which*, or *that*, but it is a matter of small consequence.

14 This way of theirs is foolishness to them, and their posterity shall agree to their mouth. Selah.

15 Like sheep are they laid in the grave: death shall feed them, and the righteous shall have dominion over them early in the morning, and their strength shall wear away: the grave from his house.

16 But God shall redeem my soul from the hand of the grave, because he hath received me.

14 *This way, &c.*] Because the verse is expounded diversely, before I set down the true sense I will briefly touch upon the opinions of other men. As the word כסל signifies sometimes the flanks, some, refining too much, take it in this place for fatness; as if it had been said, This thought is to them as fat, wherewith they cover and choke their understandings. But this is too harsh to need long disproof. Some point it thus: This way of theirs is as it were foolishness, as though the prophet should say, they lead their life frowardly, because they are not of sound mind; for it could not come to pass that men should dote so shamefully except they were utterly void of all judgment. For were they endued with one drop of understanding, would they not consider to what purpose they are created, and lift up their minds to heaven? Thus say they. But I suppose the prophet meant simply that the issues of things proved in the end that they were out of their minds that so place their happiness in the world. As if he should say that at length the madness of those that are bemired in the world is detected to their great shame; and that although they esteem themselves to be men of rare wisdom, and applaud themselves in their own sagacity, yet it is disclosed with deserved reproach how witless they were. And this the prophet speaks on purpose to exhibit in stronger colours the madness of the children, who though taught so pointedly by the example of their fathers, yet do not renounce their error. And because this latter member also is diversely wrested by the interpreters, I will first declare what others think of it. The verb רצה is taken for *to walk*, and the noun פִּי is taken for *a measure*, as if it had been said that the children walk, or proceed, after the manner of their fathers: and so they change the letter ב into כ the mark of similitude; which is common among the Hebrews. And I confess this sense differs not much from the words and meaning of the prophet. Others refer it to brute beasts, but it is too forced. But more correct in my opinion are those who take the word *mouth* for instructions, or precepts.

Again, it suits better to take the word *רצו*, according to its common and most received signification, that it should denote a consent or willingness, and therefore I have translated it *to agree*. Now, the meaning of the prophet is this, that since the fond confidence of worldlings issues in folly, so that they are justly a laughingstock among all men, it is a monstrous madness in their posterity that they cannot take warning by such experience to begin to be wise, but delight themselves in the same dotage, and both think and speak as their fathers did. Moreover, as it is God's will that his judgments should be weighed in the world, it became them to consider more advisedly what happened to their fathers. But now, since passing over and neglecting such notable examples they run headlong into the same fondness, so much the more are they convicted of brute insensibility.

15 *Like sheep are they laid, &c.*] The similitude is very appropriate, that these men go down into the grave as sheep are gathered in their fold under the hand of their shepherd. For the whole world is scarce enough for a proud man. They are severally so swollen in their own fond imaginations, that they in a manner challenge the sun, the air, and the earth, as their own, apart from all other men. From this their immeasurable pride, whereby they stretch themselves far and wide, the prophet gathers them in flocks like sheep into the grave, and hands them over to death to feed them. The meaning therefore is, that whereas they challenge sovereignty to themselves among men, they shall at length come under the yoke of death, that they may learn, when it is too late, that they made their boast of a thing of nought. For to lie prostrate under the tyranny of death is a more wretched and foul slavery than to be in subjection to any commands of men whatsoever. In the second member the prophet separates God's children from this sorrowful and hapless lot, and so anticipates that which otherwise had been easy to object: Thou sayest true indeed, that they shall die that put their trust in this world, but what novelty allegest thou? or why upbraidest thou men with the law of nature, since this necessity is laid upon all men? Again, why scoffest thou at mortal men, as though thou wert not one of the number of them thyself? This objection is judiciously encountered by the prophet, as though he should say, If death were the destruction of the whole man, I should say no new thing; but as the faithless shamefully bereave themselves of the better life, to which we are created, deservedly and rightly do I find fault with their madness. For it is extravagant perverseness to fling from them the hope and thought of the life to come, and renounce their claim to heavenly

glory, in order that they may be happy for a moment, and as it were in a dream. Now we see that which I spoke of at first, that the doctrine of this Psalm differs far from the precepts of the philosophers. For the philosophers, in appropriate and eloquent terms, deride worldly ambition, reprove men's fond lusts, yea and expose the frailty of mankind; but the chief thing is omitted by them; namely, that we are happy because we are ruled by the providence of God: and again, that all our adversities shall fall out for the best, because there remains an everlasting inheritance for us in heaven. Now, if it be demanded what manner of dominion that of the righteous shall be, the answer is ready; that as it behoves all reprobates to be cast down under our head Christ, so that they may be his footstool, the same thing extends also to all his members. For whereas it is said that he shall deliver up the kingdom to God his father, surely his so doing shall not make an end of his church, but it shall bring to pass that God may be all in all. And in the adverb of time, *early*, there is a very appropriate metaphor. For inasmuch as we walk now in darkness, the life of man upon earth is tacitly compared to night, or sleep, and that especially in respect of the faithless, who sit at ease upon the earth as men in a slumber. Nay rather, all things are involved in such a mist of confusion, that even godly minds also are overwhelmed with drowsiness, saving so far forth as God shineth upon them with his word. Doubtless we see not but through a glass, and in a riddle, and therefore the Lord's coming shall be as the morning, in which as well the reprobates as the elect shall awake, each after their own manner: that is to say, because the chosen, shaking off all sloth and sluggishness, yea and having chased away all clouds, shall behold Christ the sun of righteousness face to face with clear sight, and in him the full brightness of life; and the reprobates who now are stark blind, being awakened from their sluggishness, shall begin to know a new life, of which now they feel no manner of taste. And this warning is needful, not only because our flesh draws us evermore downward, and for the most part chokes and darkens the light of faith; but also because worldlings gather from the continual revolution of the world that there shall be none other life, according also as Peter tells us that they laugh at the hope of the resurrection, because the course of nature has flowed uninterruptedly from the beginning through so many hundred years: 2 Pet. iii. 4. Wherefore, lest their frowardness should trouble us, let us call to mind this saying of the prophet, that although the world be, as now, drowned in darkness, there shall rise up a new morning suddenly,

which shall restore to us the sight of the true and everlasting life. Afterwards follows, *their strength shall wear away*, or their shape or beauty shall wax old. For the word צורה is interpreted both ways. If we read *strength*, the sense will suit very well, that these worldlings abound in wealth and puissance, but for a short time, because they soon wither and decay, or rather melt away. But because the other interpretation is received with more consent, I willingly subscribe, that *their shape or beauty tendeth to decay*. For as Paul, 1 Cor. vii. 31, says, that the fashion of this world passes away, meaning thereby that the beauty of the worldly state is but as a shadow, so the prophet doth aptly compare vainglory, which has no solidity in it, to shape. That which follows is somewhat obscure. Some translate it, *the grave is their house*, and then they make ה the letter forming a noun. But it agrees better with the words and mind of the prophet that it should be interpreted otherwise: namely, that *the grave waiteth for them from their house*. For the changing of the number is frequent among the Hebrews. And the prophet's meaning is, that although they dwell now in gorgeous houses, where they think themselves to have a sure nest, yet it will come to pass, within a while, that they shall be compelled to go out of doors, and the grave shall receive them. Perhaps also he alludes covertly to their stately passing from place to place, because they never come abroad without great pomp. The prophet therefore denies that it shall be so with them always, because they shall one day go down into the grave.

16 *But God shall redeem, &c.*] The particle אך may also be translated *certainly*. For whereas the prophet said in general that the righteous should have dominion in the morning, now he applies it to his own peculiar use, to build up his own faith the surer. It is therefore an appurtenance to the former sentence, wherein the prophet applies to his own person what he had spoken recently of all the righteous. It is well enough known that *the hand* is taken for sovereignty, command, dominion, or power: others would have it taken for the stroke of death, but it is too constrained. Now in these words the prophet confesses, that by nature he is subject to death, but yet that God shall be his saviour and redeemer. Moreover, we have here a notable record of the faith in which the holy fathers lived and died under the law; for we see they stayed not upon this present life, but lifted up their minds, and by this means proceeded in their race through this life until they had finished their course. For if the prophet should hope to be delivered but from a peril or two, he would have done

but as the children of this world do, whom God riddeth oftentimes of great dangers. Therefore he hoped for life in death, because having overcome the darkness of the world, he directed his eyes to that morning which should bring with it an everlasting day. Whence we gather also that the promises of the law were spiritual, upon trust of which the holy fathers did willingly and gladly wander as pilgrims in the world, that they might at length rest in the heavenly heritage. Wherefore it is so much the greater marvel that the Sadducees, who were brought up in the law, could fall into such a depth of stupidity as to think that the soul of man is nothing but a breath: for he must be more than blind that can get over this place as if there were no mention made in it of the heavenly life. For how will that be wrested which is spoken in the last verse concerning the new and unaccustomed morning? Certainly the daystar rises daily to the world, but in that place he speaks of one certain day in which God himself shall supply the office of the sun to enlighten us with the beholding of his glory. Now then, as he adds, *Doubtless, God shall redeem my soul from the power of the grave*, does he not promise himself some peculiar thing, that happens not to the residue of men? But if to be redeemed from death be a privilege given to the children of God alone, we gather for a certainty that there is a better life to be hoped for. Also it is worth while to mark that which I touched upon just now; namely, that we then profit aright by God's promises, when each man applies severally to himself that which God offereth generally to all men. For whereby is he sure of the redemption of his soul, but because the state of the godly shall be otherwise in time to come, than it is now seen to be in the world? And by uniting himself with the company of God's children, he warrants that he shall also be partaker of this grace. That which he adds afterwards is read in Hebrew word for word thus, *because he shall take me up*. But some turn the particle *for* or *because* into the adverb of time *when*, and take the word לָקַח to signify to take quite away; so that the sense would be, When the Lord shall take me out of this life to himself, he shall rid my soul from the power of the grave. But I fear lest this be too much wrested. More rightly do others deem that the future tense is put instead of the preter, and so still keep the proper signification of the word, *for* or *because*. For the prophet's hope of his resurrection was not to be sought for in himself, but in God's free adoption, because God had embraced him with his favour, and taken him into the number of his children. Howbeit there needs no change

of the time of the verb, if any man like this exposition: God shall take upon him the custody of my soul in death, and therefore he shall save it from destruction. For whence comes it that men think themselves forlorn when they go down into the grave, but because they commit not their souls to the protection and keeping of God? Because they account them not to be safe in his keeping, as though they were a precious deposit. Therefore, howsoever man's soul vanish away to all appearance when it passes out of the body, yet must we believe that it is gathered up as it were into God's bosom, there to be faithfully kept till the day of the resurrection.

17 Fear not when a man shall be enriched, and when the glory of his house shall be multiplied.

18 For he shall carry nothing away in death; his glory shall not go down after him.

19 For he shall bless his own soul in his lifetime; and they shall praise thee when thou doest well by thyself.

20 He shall come but to the age of his fathers; and he shall not see the light for ever.

21 Man is in honour, and shall not understand; he is become like the beasts, they shall perish.

17 *Fear not when, &c.*] He repeats the same sentiment that we had before under the form of exhortation; that is, that it is in vain for God's children to be put in fear by the riches and power of their enemies, and that there is no reason why they should envy them, because this tottering felicity of theirs passes away quickly like a shadow. And lest our minds should grovel upon the earth, he will have the end of our life to be always before our eyes. For thereby it will come to pass, that the weariness of miseries shall not overwhelm us, wherewith it behoves us to be exercised in this our short race. Again, he will have us with a high mind to despise all the guileful pomps in which worldly men delight themselves so much. Therefore, lest we might be troubled with such sights, the prophet wisely calls us back to the consideration of death, which coming suddenly upon us will strip us of this false splendour, and cast us down into the grave. For by these words, *he shall carry nothing away in death*, he means, that in how high estate soever men be, yet may they not abide in the same glory beyond the end of their life. And he confirms this nakedness in the next

member, when he says *his glory shall not go down after him*. For although miserable men struggle never so much, and strive to appropriate some glory after death, as it were whether nature will or no, yet shall they not escape decay and the reproach of nakedness; according as it is well said of the poet,

Death only discovers how little the small bodies of men are.

JUVENAL, *Satire x.* line 172.

19 *For he shall bless, &c.*] This verse is wrested sundry ways. Some resolve the words thus; He should have blessed his soul in his lifetime. Some refer the first member to the unbelievers, and the second to the faithful, who praise God in all his benefits. And others take the whole passage to concern the faithful, but improperly. As for me, I doubt not they are right who teach that even here also such persons as are given to the delights of the flesh are denoted. And in the first member he says they bless their own soul as long as they live in the world: either because they give way to voluptuousness, and ingulf themselves in earthly pleasures, in short, recklessly wallow in brutish intemperance, like as the rich glutton is described by Christ in Luke xii. 19, *Feast thyself to the full, my soul, &c.*; or else doubtless because they seek for no happiness elsewhere than in the world, because they are touched with no desire of the heavenly life. Others translate it, He shall do well by his own soul; but I like it not, for methinks this place agrees with that of Moses, Deut. xxix. 19, lest perchance any man, being misled by error, might bless his own soul; that is to say, lest he should flatter himself as though he might despise God with impunity. For in this place he laughs at the fondness of those who delight themselves with dreams of fancied happiness. In the other member there is a change of the person, and an apostrophe to these voluptuous persons who dream themselves happy in this world. For the prophet's meaning is, that they are not only puffed up with their own misconception, while they take themselves to be half gods; but also are demented with the insidious flattery of the world, while they are on all hands praised and had in reputation, and accounted happy in the opinion of the multitude, and while they fulfil their own lusts, setting aside all regard of the heavenly life.

20 *He shall come but to the age, &c.*] Now he shews how deceitful those flatteries are with which the unbelievers beguile themselves, and are decoyed by others. After that they have been made drunk, says he, as well with their own

erroneous conceit as with the flattery of the vulgar, yet shall they not pass beyond the age of their fathers. And admit they be never so long lived, yet shall they not enjoy the light for ever. Others interpret it somewhat differently, that *to come to the age of their fathers* should signify as much as to be gathered into the grave to their fathers, like as death is commonly called *the way of all flesh*. And a little before the prophet said they were gathered by troops into the grave as sheep into a fold. And so they will have the sense to be thus: Forasmuch as they seek not after heaven, but lie in the world fast tied to the corruptions of the earth, they shall come to the same end as their fathers. So, according to their opinion, *not to see the light for ever*, implies as much as to be drowned in everlasting darkness, or to be utterly extinguished; for to be banished from God is far worse than all destruction. But I had rather read it conjointly; and, although they delude themselves with vain flatterings, yet shall they not pass the bound that is fixed for all mortals. However, as it is of little importance to the substance of the matter, let the choice be open. Only it is to be noted that if this latter interpretation be allowed for the better, that which follows concerning *the light* must be understood thus: that the unbelievers enjoy not the light of life but for a short time, because as soon as they are gone out of this world, there remains none other life for them. Whereby we are warned to take diligent heed, that we bless not ourselves in this life, but rather endeavour that when we are departed out of the world, all our desires may be directed to the heavenly blessedness; nor is less heed to be taken, that the vain flattery of men carry us not away. This same thing said the heathen:

— do not, if turbid Rome should disparage
Anything, agree with it, nor correct a false balance
By that scale: seek not thyself out of thyself.

PERSIUS, Satire i. line 5.

But forasmuch as it is a fault, bred in a manner naturally, to give too much credit to vain flatterings, we listen to this warning of the prophet.

21 *Man is in honour, &c.*] Forasmuch as he might seem heretofore to have spoken too disdainfully of the present life, which if estimated in itself is a singular benefit of God, he uses a sort of correction, or he mitigates the sentence that he had spoken before, by putting in one word; namely, that men grow out of kind into beasts, because they devour, without stopping to taste them, whatsoever goods God

granteth unto them, and so bring to nought the excellence which God had vouchsafed them. The prophet therefore inveighs against the froward abuse when heathens, without any relish of godliness, swallow up whatsoever good things God bestoweth upon them; and especially when they allow their senses to be overpowered with perishable honours, which ought rather to be a furtherance to their minds to help to lift them upward. This unthankfulness the prophet condemns, that worldly men shamefully deface their own excellence, and turn their light into darkness by departing from the right use of it. Whence we gather also that nobody is to blame but ourselves, that we are wretched in the world. For if we would acknowledge our benefits which God bestoweth upon us, and use them aright, there would shine forth, even in this life, some glimmerings of the blessed state to come. But this honour perishes through our own corrupting. And although the very unbelievers, so long as they live in the world, excel the brute beasts, because being endued with reason and understanding they retain as yet some traces of God's image, yet the prophet pronounces rightly according to the end of them, *that they shall be like beasts*, because being spoiled of their vain glory, they shall fall into destruction as well as the beasts. For though their souls shall continue alive after death, that shall be no hindrance, but that death may drown them in endless shame.

PSALM L.

Because the church has evermore been fraught with hypocrites, who have imagined that God was to be worshipped by them for fashion sake, with outward ceremonies only; and especially because that among the Jews, many misfollowed the figures of the law, passing over the true meaning of them, as if God had required but the sacrifices and outward ceremonies, the prophet rebukes this gross error, and tells them sharply, that God's name is wickedly profaned when godliness is placed in ceremonies; and he shews that the worship of God is spiritual, the chief parts whereof are prayer and thanksgiving.

[*A Song of Asaph's.*]

1 The God of gods, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the sun rising to the sun going down.

2 God hath shone out of Sion, which is the perfectness of his beauty.

3 Our God will come, and will not hold his peace ; a fire shall devour in his sight, and a mighty whirlwind shall be moved round about him.

4 He shall call the heavens from above, and the earth, to judge his people.

5 Gather my meek ones to me, which strike my covenant upon their sacrifices.

1 *The God of gods, &c.*] Although the Psalm be entitled to Asaph, yet is it not known whether he were the author of it, or whether he received it at David's hand, because he was one of the chief singers. But because it is a matter of no great importance, let us rather look to the argument. Many think that here is described the renewing of the church ; and this opinion has taken place everywhere, that the prophet's purpose is to warn the Jews that this shadowy worship of the law served but for a time, and should be done away within awhile after. It is most true that God in time past exercised the Jews in such rudiments as if they had been children, until the church might grow to man's estate, and the time of fulness were come, as Paul terms it, Gal. iv. 4. But here another question is asked, whether the prophet direct his observation to the men of his time, and simply condemn the abuse and corruption of the law service ; or whether he prophesy of Christ's kingdom to come. It will appear easily by the text itself, that the prophet was an expounder of the law among the men of his days, to teach them that the ceremonies, at what time they were in force, were nought worth of themselves, but rather had a further meaning in them. And what is objected, that God never called the whole world except it were when the Gospel was published, because he gathered a certain and peculiar people to himself by the teaching of the law, may be disproved without any difficulty. For the prophet means not that all the world should be called, so that all the heathen should hear the catholic doctrine together ; but that God argueth his case with the Jews, as if it were before all mankind. For this protestation agrees with that of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 1 : *Hearken, ye heavens, what I shall say ; let the earth hear the words of my mouth.* Also Deut. xxx. 19 : *I take heaven and earth to witness this day, that I have set before thee the way of life and death.* And also with this of Isaiah, i. 2 : *Hearken, ye heavens ; and give ear, thou earth ; for the Lord hath spoken.* This vehemence was needful among the hypocrites, that they might shake off their self-delusions, and give heed earnestly to

God's judgment. And especially in this case it was needful that the Jews should be awakened by a more solemn appeal. For as men are prone to outward shows, they measure God also by their own disposition, and so they think they have well discharged their duty towards him, when they have occupied themselves in ceremonies. Thus it fell in with the natural disposition of the Jews blindly to seize upon the figures of the law, as though they might rightly pacify God by the observing of them. And we know that the prophets always contended vigorously about this superstitiousness, because the worst and wickedest sort of men vaunted themselves presumptuously for the true worshippers of God, if they might cloak their ungodliness with any deceitful shew of devotion. Wherefore it was not enough for the prophet to teach simply that God's service is marred and defiled, when neglecting faith and purity of heart, men are busied only about the outward ceremonies, but also to shake off their drowsiness and correct their fallacious trust, he was driven of necessity to make this solemn protestation to them. Therefore, when he brings in God citing all nations to his judgment-seat, I take it not so as though he delivered a rule of true and uncorrupt religion universally to all the world, and gathered the church on all sides to its obedience; but that the hypocrites should abandon their custom of flattering themselves. For it was no small spur to urge them forward, to have all the world made privy to their wicked dissimulation, and to be stripped out of the mask in which they vaunted themselves. To the same purpose also makes it that he calls the Lord the God of gods, for they will never cease mocking God, unless they be put in fear in good earnest. Which will better appear by the sequel of the text, where the dreadful majesty of God is described, that the hypocrites may perceive that they avail nothing with their childish toys, because they have to deal with too strict a judge. But lest any one should object that here is anything taught contrary to the law, and that the service appointed by Moses is assailed, the prophet expresses by name, that this judgment of his shall be agreeable to the law whereof he is a preacher. For, that God should speak from out of Sion, implies as much as to ratify the authority of his law; and therefore, as often as the prophets use this manner of speaking, they avouch themselves to be expounders of the law: for inasmuch as that hill was not chosen by the rashness of men, it hath relation to the law. Now, therefore, the prophet cuts off the Jews from all occasion of disputing, because God himself chargeth not such as cloak the un-

cleanness of their heart with colourable pretence by any new law, but argueth with them out of their own law delivered them by Moses. And he terms Sion by an honourable title, *the perfectness of his beauty*, because God had chosen it for his sanctuary where his name should be called upon, and there shone his image in the doctrine of the law.

3 *Our God shall come, &c.*] When he repeats that he shall come, it makes to the confirmation of his doctrine, that he may shake torpid minds more vehemently. He shall come, saith he, and shall not keep silence to the end, lest you should proceed to abuse his patience. *Our God.* This may be expounded two ways: either that the prophet, uniting himself with the true worshippers of God, who were very few in number, sets himself on the contrary part, to shew that the hypocrites falsely and vainly boast that they worship the same God that the holy fathers did; or else, which sense I like the better of the two, that the prophet, as one of the whole people, solemnly warns them that the same God, whose name all the children of Abraham pretended, would be revenged for the breach of his religion. Our God then in whom we glory will come, even that God that made the covenant with Abraham, the same that gave us the law by the hand of Moses. That which follows concerning *fire* and *whirlwind*, although it be put to awaken the Jews, that they may at length learn to be afraid at God's judgment, which they have hitherto despised too recklessly, yet contains an allusion to that dreadful sight which God shewed in mount Sinai; Ex. xix. 16. For we know that thunderings sounded through the whole air together with trumpets, and that the heavens were all on fire with lightnings, and that a flame blazed all round about the mountain, that God might subdue the minds of his people to the reverence of his law. The sense therefore is, that like as God made his people quake in old time at the publishing of his law, so will he be armed now also with terrible power to revenge the gross abuse of his doctrine.

4 *He shall call the heavens, &c.*] By these words it is easy to gather to what end he said just now that the earth should be called. For now repeating the same, he affirms that God will not have a trial and controversy save with the Jews, although in the presence of the whole world; namely, because this solemn and unaccustomed judgment differs far from the ordinary judgments which he exerciseth daily by his prophets. Therefore because the hypocrites should not always shroud them in their lurking-holes, the prophet tells them they must plead their cause before the angels, and before all men, and that they cannot escape, but

that they must be drawn forth to the crowded assembly. Nevertheless it may be demanded why the prophet cites the pure worshippers of God as offenders, seeing that the check which he will add by and by lights not but upon the hypocritical and falsehearted Jews. I answer, that God speaketh here of his whole church; and, although a great part of Abraham's offspring was fallen from the true religion, yet he hath an eye to the order that he appointed. Therefore he calleth the *meek ones*, not to bear witness to all alike of their true religion, but that they should take the better heed to the end of their calling. And therefore there lies hid a certain kind of irony in respect of the bastard and counterfeit Jews, who are obliquely reprov'd because they are not answerable to their profession. If any one would expound it more subtly thus; Set me apart the small few that worship me uncorruptly and heartily, from this confused rabble that defile my name wickedly, that they wrap not themselves hereafter in the deceitful covering of outward worship: I do not deny that it agrees well with the prophet's meaning, and with the matter that he treats of. And yet there will be no absurdity in it, if we say that in the church corrupted there is given so much honour to the godly and upright, though there were but few of them remaining, that in respect of them, the company so mixed of good and bad should be called the people of God. That which follows after is drawn into divers senses by the interpreters; for some think that *upon their sacrifices*, is spoken instead of *besides their sacrifices*, as though God should speak it in praise of his worshippers, that they acknowledge some higher matter to be required in his covenant than outward ceremonies, and therefore stay not in the earthly shadows. Others think that the spiritual worshipping of God is set directly against sacrificing; as if it had been said, *for, or instead of sacrifices, they keep my covenant, according to the rightful intent of it*, because they consecrate to me the uncorrupted obedience of the heart. But, in my judgment, the prophet commends here the true and natural use of the ritual of the law. For it was to great purpose to have it well known to what end he required sacrifices in the law. Now the prophet declares here plainly that sacrifices are of no value, but to be as it were seals or bonds, or other helps to establish the covenant of God. Yea rather he alludes to the custom that was everywhere received; for that there might be the more religion and faithfulness in leagues and covenants, we know they were wont to be confirmed with sacrifices. God, therefore, that he might bind his people the more surely to him, and that his covenant might be the better confirmed and ratified, or-

daind sacrifices. It is a place right worthy to be marked, whereby appears who are accounted before God for true members of his church; namely, such as being endued with the spirit of meekness, deal uprightly with their brethren, and with unfeigned obedience of faith confirm the covenant of adoption which he hath offered. Whosoever they are then that set up another worshipping of God, and step aside from the establishment which the heavenly doctrine has purely established, though they boast themselves a thousand times with full mouth to be God's church, yet doth the Holy Ghost banish them out of the church, because sacrifices and all other ceremonies may serve to none other purpose than to seal up the pure truth of God in us. Whence it follows that all rights or ceremonies that are not grounded upon the word of God are spurious, and that all worshipping which is not referred to that end, is but a corrupting of religion.

6 And the heavens shall shew forth his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah.

7 Hearken, O my people, and I will talk with thee: thou Israel, and I will put thee in remembrance; I am thy God, even thy God.

8 I will not find fault with thee for thy sacrifices, for thy burnt-offerings are always before me.

9 I will not take a calf out of thy house, nor goats out of thy folds.

10 For all the beasts of the forest are mine, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills.

11 I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the beasts of the field are in my power.

12 If I be hungry, I will not tell it thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.

13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?

6 *And the heavens, &c.*] Because the Jews were so dull that they surmised themselves to fulfil all points of righteousness with mockeries and puerilities, the prophet threatens that although God wink at them for the present, he will shew forth his righteousness from heaven, which shall disprove and overthrow all their fantastical devices. Think you, says he, that God is pacified with your hollow services, whereby he is mocked? howsoever you now fill the

air with those vapours, God shall at length shew forth his righteousness from heaven, and defend it from your wicked forgeries. The heavens themselves shall be witnesses of your treachery, that you have despised true holiness, and corrupted the pure worship of God. For God will not any more suffer himself to be transformed at your pleasure, as though your inward depravity, which you now colour with a fond pretence, should never be called to account before him. We see now that the prophet speaks fitly according to the nature of the cause which he hath in hand. For although men confess that God is a judge, yet because they afterwards forge to themselves deceptions wherewithal to shift him off, and so by indirect means nullify his office and authority of judging, it is needful that the sentence which he is about to give should be upheld against their vain cavils.

7 *Hearken, O my people, &c.*] After that the prophet has performed the office of a herald, and also added such things as ought of right to strike men's minds, continuing still, he brings in God speaking; and, that he may shew again that he is engaged in a matter of very great weight, he stirs them up to give ear with many words. For God, by calling them his people, challengeth authority for his word. Afterwards he warneth them that he will not talk of common things, but that he hath occasion to chide with them for transgressing the articles of his covenant. Some translate it, *I will bear witness against thee*. But by the common use of the scripture we gather that here is rather denoted a debating of the right of either part, as if God should put them in mind again of his covenant, and according to the customary form require of his chosen people that which is due by the covenant. In the same respect he saith he is the God of Israel, to call back the Jews at his only will and pleasure. And the repetition of the word *God* carries a force with it; as if he should say, When you tie me to your own devices, how far is this presumptuous rashness of yours from the reverence that is due to me! for, seeing that I am God, my majesty ought to restrain all frowardness, so that all flesh should keep silence when I speak. And among you to whom I have disclosed myself to be your God, I deserved so much the more obedience.

8 *I will not, &c.*] The state of the case is this; that God heedeth not sacrifices, nor vouchsafeth to make any account of them in themselves. Not that the Jews did sacrifice in vain and without any fruit, for it were altogether against reason that any unprofitable thing should be enjoined by God. But forasmuch as God accepteth some offices simply,

but exercises of godliness only so far forth as they are referred to their lawful end; where there is no sincerity joined with the outward signs, God with good reason rejecteth them. And this manner of speaking is common with the prophets, as we have said divers times, and especially in Ps. xli. Forasmuch then as ceremonies, if they are considered in themselves, are of no importance, God denieth that he requireth them in suchwise as if he would have his servants wholly occupied in them, seeing they are but furtherances of the spiritual service. So in Jeremiah, vii. 22, he denieth that he gave them any commandment concerning sacrifices. So the prophet Micah, vi. 7, says, *Doth thy God require of thee that thou shouldest offer him flocks of rams, or is his delight in thousands of rams? and not rather that thou shouldest do judgment and love righteousness, &c.* So also Hosea, vi. 6, *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.* In short, the prophets are full of this doctrine, and especially there are notable places in Isaiah, i. 12; lviii. i. and lxvi. 3. Although oftentimes when God complaineth that the sacrifices are defiled by ungodly persons, he not only pronounceth them to be void of fruit, and utterly refuseth them, but also addeth that his wrath is provoked by such corruptings. And this difference is to be borne in mind, that as long as God's ordinances are observed among men, and they exercise themselves in ceremonies to cherish and confirm their faith, the ceremonies are accepted as parcel of true religion, whereof they are the furtherers. But as soon as hypocrites obtrude them not only without faith, but also, neglecting purity of heart, imagine them to be propitiations to purchase God's favour, they are not only accounted worthless as fond gewgaws, but also are grievously condemned as defilements that profane the service of God. Now understand we what God meaneth by these words, *I will not reprove thee for sacrifices*; that is, because he looketh higher. The latter member may be suitably understood thus; that their burnt-offerings are ever before God's eyes even till he is full of them, or rather that he loatheth them: as in Isaiah, i. 13, he saith that they cause his stomach to revolt. Others supply the negative *not*, and join it with the former member; that God will not demand an account of the Jews for omitting their sacrifices, although they be not so diligent in them as they ought to be. Nevertheless, the opinion of those also is probable, that put in the relative *which*, and read, *for the burnt-offerings, which are always before me*; as if it had been said, Although according to the appointment of the law, it were meet you should offer me sacrifice continually, yet I will not have any quarrel against you for neglecting it.

9 *I will not take, &c.*] He allegeth two reasons why he should not care for sacrifices, nor be delighted in them. The first is, that although he eat sacrifices, yet he needeth not man's help, because the fulness of the whole world is at his command. The other is, that he hath no need at all of meat and drink, which are but supports of man's infirmity. In the first place therefore God allegeth his own riches, that he hath no need to borrow aught of men; and this part of the doctrine he handleth in former verses. Afterwards he separateth himself from men, who sustain their frail life with meat and drink; inasmuch as he is abundantly satisfied with his own life, which giveth life to the whole world. Now although the prophet seem to say nothing that is not openly known and avouched of all men, yet as we are so prone by nature to the fleshly worshipping of God, that we imagine of God according to our own fancy, this admonition is very profitable and contains hidden wisdom; namely, that when men have done all that they can, yet can they lend nothing to God, according as we have seen in Ps. xvi. 2, *my well-doing is not unto thee*; and secondly, that God demandeth nothing of us for his own use, but as he is contented with his own perfection, he seeketh man's profit in all his commandments. To the same purpose also tends this saying of Isaiah, lxvi. 2: *Heaven is my seat, and earth is my footstool: what house then will ye build for me?* also, *Hath not my hand made all these things?* By which words he exempteth himself from all need, because he himself is eternal, but the world had a beginning. Whence it follows that he is completely supplied with everything within himself, because although there were not store of other things, yet is he himself sufficient for himself.

14 Offer to God the sacrifice of praise; and pay thy vows to the Most Highest.

15 Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

14 *Offer to God the sacrifice, &c.*] This second part adds no small light to the former doctrine. For if he had said no more than that sacrifices are worthless, it might have been doubted why God had commanded them to be offered to him. But now the comparing of them with the true worship, takes away all obscurity, because it is gathered therefrom that God despiseth not sacrifices if they are rightly used. This is implanted by nature as a principle in the hearts of all men, and cannot be dislodged; that God is to

be worshipped. But as nothing is more repugnant to the disposition of all men, than to worship God purely and spiritually, they must needs imagine devices, to cast some shadow upon the matter. And although they perceive that it profits them not so to do, yet abide they entangled in their fantastical devices, because they are ashamed, or rather horribly afraid, to cast away all worshipping of God. And so ceremonies reign evermore, until the rule of worshipping God well and rightly be made known. Moreover in the words of *praise* and *prayer*, there is a figure of synecdoche, for the prophet mentions only one part of true worship when he bids us acknowledge God to be the author of all good things, and to yield him his due honour that he be not defrauded of his right; and afterwards to flee to his protection, and to deposit all your cares in his bosom, and not to seek any other deliverer in our prayers, that at length thanks may be yielded to him after deliverance received. For faith, and the denial of ourselves, and newness of life, and the bearing of the cross, are the true sacrifices which God declareth to be well pleasing to him. But as calling upon God springs from faith, and is always united with patience, and draws the mortification of the flesh with it; and also that there cannot be any true thankfulness without sound and uncorrupt affection of the heart; it is no marvel though the prophet have comprehended that class under this species. Furthermore that he may shew that the worship of God is spiritual, he contrasts the praise of God and prayer with all manner of ceremonies and outward profession of godliness. And he perverts not the due order in beginning with the praise of God. It might indeed seem a preposterous method when prayer goes before thanksgiving. But since the beginning of prayer springs from ascribing just and due honour to God, and also that it is a principle of faith to seek God as the only author of all good things, the prophet has, not unworthily, placed *praise* foremost. Besides this, as he preventeth us with his benefits ere we are born, the testimony of thankfulness is owing unto him already, before any necessity constrain us to call for his help. Finally, if men brought reason and discretion with them from their mother's womb, it would become them to begin with the sacrifice of praise. Howbeit, there is no need to labour so anxiously on this point, seeing that it was enough for the prophet to describe the spiritual worship of God in a rough way under praise, prayer, and thanksgiving, that the common sort might understand him. That which is added of *performing vows*, is an allusion to the old custom of the law, as in Psalm cxvi. 12, 13; *What reward shall I make unto the*

Lord for all the things that he hath bestowed upon me? I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. To be brief; he requireth thankfulness at the hands of God's children, which they were wont to testify in old time by solemn sacrifices. But as this is a place especially worthy to be observed, this point of doctrine must be treated of more largely. And first it is to be noted, that what is taught here, namely, that God is to be worshipped spiritually, beloned as well to the Jews as to us, even from the beginning. For when Christ goeth about to prove that there is no other worship accepted of God, he leaneth upon this reason, *that God is a spirit*, John iv. 24. But he began not then first to be a spirit when he abrogated the ceremonies of the law. It follows therefore, that he meant to be worshipped of the fathers after the same manner that he is worshipped now. And whereas he loaded them with ceremonies, he did it in consideration of the time, even as he provided for us in abrogating them. Nevertheless the worship is the same in substance, and differs only in outward appearance, because God in time past attempering himself to the capacity of the rude and weak people, stretched out his hand to them by ceremonies and other such rudiments, and dealeth more plainly with us that are men grown since the coming of Christ, and yet meanwhile there is no alteration in him. For whereas the Manicheans babbled, that God was changed by reason of the diversity of government in the church; it was as rank a quibble as if a man should prate that God is variable, because the course of the year continues not unvaried, but the springtime follows winter, and summer springtime, as also harvest follows summer in continual succession. Now, seeing that all outward ceremonies are but cold and hungry things of themselves, and serve to no purpose but to build up faith; that God may be called upon purely, the prophet with truth protests that hypocrites busy themselves in vain who make a show of empty ceremonies only. If any one object, that it were amiss to omit the sacrifices, the use whereof was not superfluous under the law, the answer is ready, that when the prophet calls the Jews to the goal, or sets them up a mark to aim at, he takes not away their helps, but only corrects their fault, because the Jews were led by them, as by hindrances, from the right way. And it is to be noted, that in the fifteenth verse, first prayer is commanded, then is inserted a promise that the prayers of them that flee to God shall not be in vain, and thanksgiving occupies the third place. Now whereas it is said, *in the day of trouble*, the duty of praying is not so restrained by this circumstance of time, but that the faithful

must go through with the same daily and hourly. Therefore, although we be at quiet, and free from all trouble, and all things flow prosperously on our side, and that no inconveniences distress us; yet must we not in anywise forbear praying, because we know we are undone if God withdraw his grace from us but one moment. But because more serious trial is made of our faith in adversity, the time of distress is not without cause expressed, as if the prophet should say that God is to be sought to in all necessity, because he is the only haven of succour. And because men commonly tremble at the sight of God, either because his glory puts them in fear, or the feeling of their own unworthiness casts them down; there is immediately added a prayer to encourage, yea and to stir us up to boldness of praying. Now, when God hath promised to be favourable to our requests, on the other side he requireth thankfulness at our hands. Again; when we hear that prayer holds as it were the first place in the service of God, if we covet to testify our devotion by an infallible proof, it behoves us to yield this honour to God whole and entire with the most ardent zeal. Wherefore the more foul and detestable is the corruption which reigns yet at this day in Popedom; namely, that angels and dead men are rashly mingled with God. They make their excuse that they do but seek patrons to help them by their prayers to God. But first it is manifest that because they acknowledge not Christ to be the Mediator, they put others in his place, whom they term patrons. Again; the forms and manners of their praying openly shew that they make no difference between God and every bit of a saint; because without making any difference, they request as much of St. Claude as of God, and prattle the Lord's prayer to the image of Catharine as devoutly as if they prayed unto God. And yet the papists, in their own judgment, do not at all derogate from the honour of God in calling upon dead men, because they conclude that prayer is no part of his worship. For they so babble about the adoration of worship, as that they leave no room for invocation. But if we weigh well the prophet's words, it will be easy to gather that all devotion falls to the ground unless God alone be called upon. If a man should ask the papists whether it were lawful to do sacrifice to dead men, they will deny it stoutly, and they will say truth; and at this day they grant it is a heinous offence to offer sacrifice to Peter or Paul, because common sense abhors so gross an impiety. But seeing that God preferreth the calling upon his name before all sacrifices, doth he not shew openly that dead men cannot be called upon without most heinous guilt? Whence it

follows, that although the papists bow their knees a thousand times before God, yet they bereave him of the chief part of his glory, while they turn their supplications to saints. And whereas there is express mention made of trouble, it brings no little comfort to weak and fearful minds. For as soon as God withdraweth the token of his favour, there creeps upon us a doubting, whether God will take charge of our welfare, or no; yea rather, we are disquieted with distrust. But contrariwise, God pricketh us with adversity, as it were with goads, to seek him, and to call upon him. This also is to be marked advisedly, that our prayers are then rightly framed according to the rule of praying well, when God provoketh us by his commandment, and hearteneth us to confidence of obtaining, by adding his promise. When the papists draw this place on performing vows, to all manner of vows, wherein they rashly and without discrimination give themselves leave to dally with God, they trifle too childishly. It is certain, as we said just now, that the subject treated of is solemn thanksgiving, but they bargain with God to redeem themselves by their vows. Besides this, in making their vows, they have so small regard to what is allowed of God, that they stick not to vow things plainly repugnant to his word.

16 And God said to the wicked man, What hast thou to do to declare mine ordinances, that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy lips?

17 And thou hatest to be reformed, and hast cast my words behind thee.

18 If thou spy a thief, thou wilt run with him, and thou art partaker with whoremongers.

19 Thou sendest forth thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue forgeth deceit.

20 Thou wilt sit and speak against thine own brother, and raisest slander upon thine own mother's children.

16 *And God said to the wicked, &c.*] Now he inveighs more openly against the counterfeit worshippers of God, all whose religion consisted in cloying God with ceremonies, as if they should cast a mist before his eyes, according as we know the world is willing to shroud itself under false shadows. Here therefore God protesteth that they avail nought with him, who under a cloak of ceremonies conceal an unclean heart and a wicked life. This sentence, which ought to be received by common consent of all men, was very irksome

to the Jews, and very loath they were to hear of it. Indeed all men confess in mere words that God's service is defiled, if he be not worshipped sincerely and heartily. Yea even the heathen poets were forced to confess this, and we know that heinous offenders were not suffered to come at their sacrifices nor to enter their temples. But what was imprinted in the hearts of all men, meanwhile hypocrisy defaces, yea and so utterly blots out, that even the most impure of men dare thrust themselves into the sight of God, as though he were beholden to them for their frivolous gewgaws. Therefore, not without exceeding great necessity do the prophets so often inculcate this doctrine, that the more hypocrites labour to counterfeit godliness, so much the sorer judgment do they purchase themselves by such deceptions. Nay, howsoever the spirit of God crieth out that it is a blasphemous abuse of God's name to pretend an outward show of holiness without true faith and repentance, the papists can never divest themselves of this devilish heresy, that the final intent, as they term it, suffices to make their shadowy trifles acceptable to God. They confess indeed that none deserve grace of condignity, save such as are in a state of grace, but yet they hold to the persuasion that the bare exercises of godliness prepare men to deserving, although the soundness of the heart be wanting. And so, if a monk, rising from an unclean bed, thrust himself before God with a polluted and fetid mouth, and chant psalms without any devotion of heart; if any whorehunter, or perjurer, or extortioner, ransom his sins with masses, vowed pilgrimages, and such other trifles, they will not that his labour is in vain. But on the contrary part God crieth out, that such as separate the outward signs of holiness from faith and from the pure affection of the heart, not only lose their labour, but also are guilty of profaneness, because they wrongfully abuse his name. And in this place the prophet does away with and confutes this common objection: What? will not God at least make some account of the sacrifices that are done in honour of him? For he shews that this thing is deservedly imputed to them for a crime, that they lie to God, as much as in them is, and unworthily profane his sacred name; for he condemns their shameless boldness with these words, *What hast thou to do to declare mine ordinances?* that is to say, Why pretendest thou to be one of my holy people, as though my covenant belonged to thee? But seeing he rejects here all profession of holiness which proceeds not from a pure heart, what shall be done with such ceremonies as come far short of the declaration of God's word?

17 *And thou hast hated, &c.*] He convinces the hypo-

crites of their treachery, that in their life and works they renounce the godliness which they boast of in words. And he proves their contempt of God by this, that they yield no reverence to his word. For this is the true proof of our fear of God, when we submit ourselves to his word, and willingly embrace whatsoever he commandeth and teacheth. But the hypocrisy of men tends always to this end, that they may shun this obedience by their long and crooked evasions. Therefore the prophet points out the wellspring of wickedness, when he complains that the word of God is cast behind their back, and makes the obedience of faith to be the beginning of true worship. At the same time also he notes the cause of this frowardness; namely, because wicked persons cannot abide to bear the yoke of God. For they would willingly grant him this glory, that whatsoever proceedeth out of his mouth is true and right, but as God by his speaking compelleth us to order, and putteth a bridle upon us to restrain all the affections of our flesh, his words are troublesome and hateful to us. And thus our own pride sets us against God, because we are loath to receive his correction, and it cannot come to pass that any man should with a meek and willing mind hear God speaking, and obey his word, until he yield himself up to his ruling and correction. Afterwards the prophet reckons up the fruits of ungodliness, that hypocrites being given to theft and adultery, entangle and mingle God's holy name with such abominations. Moreover, in touching upon certain species only, he means that all froward and disobedient persons, who refuse correction, rush forth eagerly and with unbridled license, whithersoever lust carries them or evil examples invite them. He sets down first, theft, then whoredom, and thirdly slanders and revilings. The greater part of interpreters take the word *תרץ* for *to run*, though some others derive it from *רצה*, so that it should signify *to consent*. As for the prophet's meaning, since it matters little which of them we admit, and both of them are allowable, I leave it to the discretion of the readers. Whereas he says that the hypocrites *send forth their mouth to evil*, perchance he not only rebukes the malady of backbiting, but also all other hurtful speeches; for immediately after follows, *thy tongue forgeth deceits*. We know with what various means of annoyance and hurt, lying and deceitful tongues are furnished. By the word *sit* he seems to allude to judgments; as if he should say, that under the pretence of lawful discipline, they wrongfully backbite their brothers: although it may be expounded of common sauciness. For talkative persons sit still and spend their idle time in evil speaking. But I think rather that that most horrible

crime is condemned, namely, when the wicked slander the good and simple persons, and load them with unmerited odium, even in the very court. By naming them *their brothers*, and *their mother's children*, he expresses more forcibly how cruel their slander is, because, forgetting their common nature, they spare not so much as their own brothers.

21 Thou hast done these things, and I have held my peace; thou thoughtest that I would have been like thee; I will reprove thee, and lay them in order before thee.

22 O consider this, ye that forget God; lest he pluck you away, and there be none that can deliver you.

23 He that offereth praise, shall glorify me; and to him that ordereth his way aright, will I shew the salvation of God.

21 *Thou hast done, &c.*] As hypocrites harden themselves in their stupidity, and cannot lightly be moved by any rebukes, however severe, until they feel God's hand heavy upon them, therefore the prophet insists the more vehemently, and tells them plainly, that although God wink for a time, yet they sooth themselves with vain delusions untowardly and to their own destruction; yea rather they provoke God's wrath most grievously by this their mockery, that they think him to be a favourer of mischief. For God cannot be offered a more atrocious insult than when he is despoiled of his justice. Not that the hypocrites say so openly, but because in their depraved imagination they transform God, so that they draw motives for pampering themselves from his long-sufferance. For if they were earnestly persuaded that God abhorreth wickedness, they must needs be troubled with continual inquietness. Therefore, their thoughtless indulgence of themselves, shews that they array God in false characters, and not only take from him the office of judge, but also make him a patron and approver of wickedness. At the same time also he rebukes the hypocrites for abusing God's lenity and patience so sadly, as to conceive a hope of impunity therefrom. And therefore he tells them, that shortly they shall be drawn into the open light, so as they shall be compelled to see their wickedness with their own eyes, which they went about to hide from God's eyes. For thus I expound the words, *I will lay them in order*, that God will set out a beadroll of all their wickedness in regular order, which they shall be forced to read and acknowledge whether they will or no.

22 *O consider this, &c.*] This rebuke shews again that when we have to deal with careless hypocrites, they scornfully elude all doctrine unless they are goaded in the severest manner. Nevertheless the prophet menaces them, and puts them in fear after such a sort as that he leaves them hope of forgiveness provided they make haste to amend. But lest they should be too slow, he sets before them as well the soreness as the swiftness of God's judgment; and at the same time casts them reproachfully in the teeth with their unthankfulness in forgetting God. Moreover, this above others is a notable proof of God's gracious goodness, that he stretcheth out his hand to the wicked corrupters of godliness, though they had wickedly defiled his religion, and with impious presumption laughed at his forbearance, and had abandoned themselves to gross crimes; although he promiseth to be merciful unto them, provided they return to a sound mind. For he calleth not men to repentance, but by putting them in hope of atonement, so that they may be bold to come forth into his sight cheerfully. Surely this is an inestimable mercy; he calleth to him again the traitorous renegades and covenant-breakers that had revolted from the doctrine of godliness, in which they had been brought up, that they may have place again in his church. And surely nothing is said here which we have not for the most part had experience of, whom God of his incredible mercy hath gathered again into his sheepfold, when our own false-hearted falling away had made us strangers to him. At the same time it is to be noted that the prophet warns them that are fallen away from God, that if they return not to him with speed, the gate shall not always be open for them. And truly we must ever beware that the time of favourableness slip not from us by our own slothfulness, lest afterwards we howl in vain, as Esau did: Gen. xxvii. 34. For to this end serves the threatening, that when God layeth his hand upon us, there is none that may rescue us.

23 *He that offereth praise, &c.*] Now the third time the prophet inculcates that nothing is more acceptable to God than the sacrifice of praise, whereby we testify our thankfulness towards him. Neither is the repetition superfluous, for two causes. For both forgetfulness of God's benefits creeps easily upon us, or rather of a thousand benefits we scarcely taste one, and that lightly and for fashion sake, and also we by no means make such account of God's praise as we ought. For whereas it is the chief duty of godliness in which God will have us exercise ourselves all our life long, it is neglected as some common or trifling thing. Therefore he avouches that the right worshipping of God is contained

in the sacrifice of praise. For, by the word *glorify*, God meaneth that the way to worship him rightly and truly, and to yield unto him the honour that he requireth, is for men to praise his benefits among themselves with a pure and thankful mind; and that as for the other sacrifices which hypocrites apply themselves to, he heedeth not them nor accounteth them any part of his service. By the way, you must also remember what I touched upon erewhile; namely, that under praise is comprehended as well faith as prayer. For only experience opens our mouth to praise God. But we feel not God's goodness but by faith. Whence it follows that the whole of spiritual worship is denoted here by the consequence, or by the effect of it. And therefore, soon after, the prophet requires generally that those who covet to have their obedience allowed before God, should order their life aright. For whereas some suppose that, *to order* or *dispose a man's way*, is but to confess his sins; and whereas others expound it to take away stumbling-blocks, and to make the way level for all men to follow, both of them seem constrained. But I have no doubt that the prophet sets *the right way* against the crooked and winding by-paths of them that feign themselves to seek God; and so means that there is no approaching God but with a pure heart and simple uprightness. I take not *God's salvation* for a notable and renowned deliverance, as some would have it, but I am of opinion that God speaketh of himself in the third person, that he might express the more clearly that he would shew openly to his true worshippers how it is not his will that he should be accounted their Saviour in vain.

PSALM LI.

The title, which we shall see by and by, shews for what cause this Psalm was made. For when David, after committing a most grievous offence, had lain a long time in deadly torpor, after that Nathan had awakened him by rebuking him for it, he not only repented him earnestly of it, and humbled himself before God, but also minded to witness his repentance openly before all men, and to leave a memorial of it to them that should come after him. And at the beginning, setting before himself the heinousness of his offence, that he may raise himself up to hope of forgiveness, he mightily extols the immeasurable mercy of God with sundry encomiums, and humbly confesses himself to be guilty not one way only, but to be worthy of many deaths, that he may the more effectually provoke God to mercy. Afterwards, forasmuch as he had deserved to be cast off for ever, so that he ought of right to have been bereft of all gifts of the Holy Ghost, he prays heartily to be restored to a sound state again. At length he affirms that if he shall obtain forgiveness, he will be thankful and mindful of it. Besides this, he shews that it is to the behoof of the whole church that God should hear him. And surely, inasmuch as God had deposited the covenant of his grace with him, if he should have miscarried, the welfare of all men might seem to have come to nought in the person of one man.

[To the chief chanter. *A Song of David.*]

2 When the prophet Nathan came unto him, after that he had gone in unto Bath-sheba.

2 *When the prophet, &c.*] The coming of the prophet is spoken of here on purpose to reprove David's dulness. For it was a portentous matter that so noble a personage, and one endued with so excellent a spirit, could lie besotted in his sin above a year, as if he had been bereft of his senses. For who would not say that he was bewitched by Satan, that his conscience should be so sound asleep as to despise, or at least to neglect, the vengeance of God? This mark of stupidity, then, increases his fault that he was touched with no remorse of conscience of his own accord until the prophet was sent unto him. But the same proceeding makes not a little to the advancement of God's gracious goodness, that he goeth about to bring him back by the hand of his prophet when he had strayed and wandered away. To which purpose belongs the placing of the words *come* and *go*, in which there is a tacit contrast. After David had *gone in* unto

Bath-sheba, the prophet Nathan is said to have come in unto him. But by that impure approach he had gone back far from God. The goodness of God therefore shone so much the brighter, in that he stretched out his hand afar off to pull back a runaway. Nevertheless, it is not to be thought that he was so utterly void of all understanding, but that he acknowledged God in general to be the judge of the world; and prayed daily; and not only exercised himself in worshipping him, but also endeavoured to frame his life and conversation according to the rule of the law. We may know then, that he was not utterly void of all fear of God, but blinded in one particular, so that he lulled to sleep the sense of God's wrath with his untoward self-delusions. And so his godliness, which otherwise sent forth many sparks, was in this behalf quenched. Now seeing that such brutish insensibility crept upon so holy a prophet, and most excellent king, there is no man but ought to tremble at his example. But whereas he was immediately stricken with fear at the voice of the prophet, and laying aside all stubbornness, yielded himself docile and obedient, we gather that the feeling of godliness was not utterly quenched in his mind; for then had he not so easily nor so suddenly burst forth into this saying, *I have sinned against the Lord, what shall I do?* 2 Sam. xii. 13, unless he had held still some seed of godliness, though it were hidden. And we are taught by this example, that when we have sinned, we must not tarry till God thunder out of heaven, but we must quietly and willingly be ruled by his prophets, by whose mouth he calleth us to repentance.

3 Have pity upon me O God, according to thy mercy; according to the multitude of thy compassions wipe away mine offences.

4 Multiply to wash me from my sin, and cleanse me from my wickedness.

3 *Have pity upon me, &c.*] I have already premised that David begins with desire of forgiveness, and consequently that he craves not pardon at God's hand simply, and with a word or two, but that, according to the heinousness of his offence, he makes careful suit to God to shew himself not inexorable. Therefore, after he has made mention of his mercy, he adds *the multitude of his compassions*; because it was no ordinary mercy that he had need of, being involved in so great guilt. If he had only besought God to have pity upon him according to his mercy or goodness, he

would in so doing have confessed himself to be a forlorn person; but since he lays his wickedness open, and expressly declares that they cannot otherwise be done away than by God's succouring him with the immeasurable store of his compassions, he not a little increases the heinousness of his own fault. For there is an implied antithesis between them and the multitude of his offences. But more forcible is that which follows immediately after, *that God should multiply to wash*. For whereas some think *הרבה* to be a noun, it is somewhat too far off from the Hebrew idiom. And although the meaning would be all one, that God should wash him abundantly and many times together; yet I more willingly embrace the phrase that agrees best with the character of the tongue. In the meanwhile, there is no doubt but he avouches plainly that his filthiness is not so small that it can be washed out with a moderate ablution; but that it cleaves fast, yea, or rather is deep sunk in, so that it has need of many washings to make it clean; not that it is any hard matter to God to cleanse men, but because the more the sinner feels himself defiled, so much the more ought he to stir up himself to careful and continual sighings, that he may at length escape from the terrors of conscience. As for the metaphor, we know it is often to be met with in the scriptures. For as sins are as it were filth and uncleannesses that defile us, and stain us, and make us fetid in the sight of God; the remission of them is aptly termed a washing away. And this doctrine must make as well to the commendation of God's grace, as to the hatred and detestation of sin. For they are excessively dull, who are not struck with horror at this expression.

5 For I acknowledge my sins, and my wickedness is ever before me.

6 Against thee, against thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight; that thou mayest be justified in thy sayings, and pure in judging.

7 Behold, I was begotten in wickedness, and my mother conceived me in sin.

8 Behold, thou hast loved truth in the inward parts, and thou hast taught me wisdom in secret.

5 *For I acknowledge, &c.*] He shews why he insists so carefully and earnestly in suing for pardon; namely, because he cannot be in quiet until he be reconciled to God. And by this means he witnesses that he brings with him no

dissimulation, as some do now and then, who garnish God's grace in forgiving sins with great splendour of words, and yet care for it but coldly, because they are not much touched with his judgment. David, therefore, that he may obtain pardon, says, not without cause, that he is vexed with continual torments, and forced to this vehemence of praying by the unquietness which he endures. Whence we gather that there is no other means of reconciliation than that our own conscience wound us and afflict us, and vex us with continual unquietness until God be made favourable to us, that he may quiet us with his mercy. Therefore we then crave pardon at God's hand in good earnest when the horribleness of our sins thrusting itself before our eyes, strikes a terror into us at the same time. Whence it follows that as long as men bear with themselves, they kindle God's wrath more against them to punish them the sorer. Wherefore let us learn not only to condemn ourselves with our mouth, but also to make rigid and dreadful examination of our own sins if we desire to be absolved by God. For David says not that he confesses his sins before men, but that he feels them within, and truly not without sore torment: whereas hypocrites either recklessly cast behind their backs, or bury in criminal forgetfulness, whatsoever the vices that prick them. And again, the plural number is to be marked in the word *sins*. For although all flowed out of one fountain, yet was his offence manifold, because that to his adultery he had joined treachery and cruelty, and had betrayed not one man alone, or a few men, but the whole host that was fighting for the welfare of God's church. And therefore not without cause does he acknowledge many sorts of sin in one wickedness.

6 *Against thee, against thee, &c.*] Some expound these words thus: that although David had offended against men, yet could no man bear witness of his fault, save God: for the double wrong that he had done to Uriah was unknown to men. Likewise, that he had no less treacherously than cruelly exposed to slaughter and carnage, the army that was making war in his quarrel, was hidden also. Therefore they understand that the sins were committed against God alone, which no man living was privy to. Others expound it otherwise, that although David had offended against men, yet his greatest grief was for this one thing, that he had broken God's law. But I am of opinion that these words import as much as if he had said, Lord, although the whole world should acquit me, yet is it enough and too much for me, that I feel thee to be my judge, and that mine own conscience cites and drags me to thy judg-

ment-seat, so that men's comforts can do me no good, if they either bear with me, or lessen my fault to flatter me, or sooth me to assuage my sorrow. He means then that he hath his eyes and all his senses fastened upon God, and therefore regards not what men think or speak. Now whosoever is so pressed, or rather overwhelmed with the weight of God's judgment, he has no need of any other accuser, for God alone is as good as a thousand. And I doubt not but David, to shut out all court flatteries, lest he might yield himself to be soothed by them, called himself wholly back to God's judgment, and persuaded himself that he should have more than enough to do to deal with God, although no living man troubled him. And this must we hold for a rule, if we covet to be endued with the true affection of repentance. For verily what avails it us to be acquit by the verdicts of men, or to shun our guiltiness by winking at it, if our conscience accuse us before God? or at least if God himself be at enmity with us? But the only means whereby we may not be deluded with vain imaginations, and the fittest remedy for it, is to enter into ourselves, and to gather all our thoughts to God, that we may be confounded before him, and that the fear of his wrath may banish all soothing flatteries from us. The second part of the verse, namely, *that thou mayest be justified in thy sayings*, is wrested violently by some interpreters, while they unite it with the former verse, as though it ought not to be referred to the sentence next ensuing. But, besides that they break the thread of the words, I see not what sense they can pick out of this manner of praying, *Have pity upon me, that thou mayest be pure in thy judgment*. Paul to the Romans, iii. 3, takes away all doubts, setting men's wickedness against God's judgment. *What then, says he, if some of the Jews have been unbelieving, shall God be unrighteous? God forbid. Nay rather, let God be true, and all men liars, according as it is written, That thou mayest be justified in thy sayings, &c.* For we see the text applied to this purpose, that in men's wickedness God's righteousness shines forth, and in their lying shines forth his truth. Furthermore, that we may know what David means, and what his drift is, it behoves us to call to remembrance the covenant that God made with him. For as the welfare of the world was laid up in him, it was a ready matter for the wicked to throw out this slander: If this fellow were the pillar of the church, what shall become now of the wretched souls that have leaned upon his holiness? If this man were as the sun, or as the morning-star, how has he thrown himself down to hell? how may we seek for hope of salvation in

his seed, after his so foul a fall? Therefore, when he saw that through men's wrongful judgments, occasion was sought to assault God's righteousness, he encounters them betimes, and avouches that it is wrongfully done to ascribe any part of the fault unto God; for he himself was so wholly and altogether to blame, that God continues holy, and his righteousness and truth stand unimpaired. Howbeit, by his *sayings*, I understand not his promises, as some like to do, but rather the judgment itself that God was about to give upon David, had not his guilt, together with his fault, been blotted out by free forgiveness; for I doubt not but he repeats one thing twice according to his custom. Therefore, for *God to be justified in his sayings*, and *to be pure in judging*, signify the same thing. But as Paul, Rom. iii. 4, seems to apply as well this saying, as the substance of the whole verse to another meaning, I will briefly shew how what David speaks agrees properly with his purpose. He cites these words to prove, that although the Jews are covenant-breakers, and are fallen from the grace that was promised them, yet is not God untrue; though this seems not at first sight to be possible to be gathered hence. But if we call to mind the circumstance whereof I have made mention, we shall easily see that this testimony is appositely adduced; for since he was a king and notable prophet in the church, yea, and as a chief pillar of it, there is no doubt but that his fall shook the minds of a number, or rather impeached the faithfulness of God's promises. Surely many would have thought, that as God had joined that man to him in so close a connection, he must needs have sustained some part of the blame. This slander he prevents when he says, Lord, although thou pluck me out of heaven and throw me headlong down to hell, I will lie still and yield: but thou in the meanwhile shalt keep still thy judgment-seat as thou art worthy, neither shall aught of thy righteousness be abated, though men carp at thee. Paul departs from the words of the prophet in this respect only, that by following the Greek translation, he took the word *judge* passively, and instead of *to be pure* puts *to overcome*. Howbeit, it is well enough known that the apostles were not so precise in reciting the words, as often as they allege texts out of the law and the prophets. And therefore it ought to suffice us, that Paul applies this passage rightly to his own purpose. And hence is to be gathered a general doctrine, that whatsoever fault be found in men, the blame of it is in themselves, so that God's righteousness retains evermore its full and perfect praise. For we see how blasphemous is the presumption of the world in clamouring against God, as

often as he judgeth not according to the understanding and will of the flesh. Therefore, when God either lifteth up the most despised persons, or suffereth such to fall as he had set aloft; howsoever the outward appearance of discrepancy or absurdity in these judgments trouble us, yet let this warning hold us still in sober and modest reverence, that whatsoever he appointeth it is rightful, and therefore that most perfect righteousness shines evermore as well in his works as in his words. Moreover, the adverb *that*, or לָמַעַן, imports not so much the rendering of a cause in this place, as a consequence. For David's falling was not properly the cause that God's glory appeared in his judgments; but forasmuch as by sinning men darken God's righteousness, he says that it emerges of itself by its own power, so that it appears more bright, because it is the peculiar office of God to bring light out of darkness.

7 *Behold, I was begotten, &c.*] Now he not only confesses himself guilty of one sin or more, as he has hitherto done, but he mounts up higher, that he brought nothing with him from his mother's womb but sin, and that he is by nature wholly corrupted, and as it were besmeared with sinfulness. And thus by reflecting on the heinousness of one offence, he was brought to think, that being born in sin he had no cleanness or soundness at all in him. And truly we do not else acknowledge our sins completely unless we condemn our whole nature. Yea rather, every particular offence must bring us to this general acknowledgment, that nothing but mere depravity reigns in all the parts of our soul. Notwithstanding, ere I proceed any further, I will say somewhat of the word יַחַמְתִּי. Among the Hebrews it is word for word, *she heated herself of me*, from the word יָחַם, or חָמַם, which signifies *to heat*, or *to warm*. Nevertheless, forasmuch as that form of expression is somewhat of the harshest, the interpreters judiciously mitigate the metaphor when they translate it, *my mother conceived me*. It seems to me that the prophet meant to intimate that we are cherished and kept warm in sin, as long as we lie hid in the bowels of our mothers. Now I return to the matter itself. The acknowledgment of one sin draws David to a long examination of his whole life, until he find nothing in himself but sin. Yet speaks he not of the corruptness of his nature as hypocrites do, who are wont to make a veil of it to cover their faults with: I confess I have sinned, but what could I do? I am flesh, we are all prone to sin by nature; nay rather, our lewd lusts hold us bound and tied to them, so that it is altogether the nature of man to sin. David sought no such lurking-holes wherein to hide himself from God's judgment;

✓ but rather, to enhance the grievousness of his misdeeds, he fetches his beginning from original sin; as if he should say, It was not lately that he had incurred guilt by this kind of sin or that, but he came full fraughted with sin from his mother's womb. And truly this is a luminous text for the proof of original sin, wherein Adam has involved all mankind. And hereby also may be gathered the right definition of it. In time past the Pelagians, because they thought it against reason that all of us should be lost for one man's offence, prattled that sin proceeded from Adam only by imitation of him. But the scripture, both in this place and in many others, avouches openly that sin is bred in us by nature, so that the corruption is settled and fixed within us. For David accuses not his parents, nor transfers the fault to them, but cites himself to the judgment-seat of God, avouching himself to be formed in sin, so that he was already a sinner before he was born into the world. And therefore too wickedly did Pelagius deny that sin flows by infection into the offspring, and is as it were hereditary. At this day the papists, although they deny not that man's nature is corrupt, yet lessen it in suchwise that original sin should be scarce anything but an evil inclination to sinning. Again; they restrain it to the lower part of the soul, and the gross desires. And although experience shew plainly that this corruptness reigns in men even to the end of their life, yet they deny it to be sin after we are baptised. But unless it be granted that sin possesses all the parts of the soul, we understand not the strength and force of it. Therefore, whosoever confesses not that the mind of man is utterly corrupted, and his heart altogether froward, knows but a small portion of original sin. And surely the words of David sound far otherwise than the papists babble; that is, *that he was shapen in sin, and kept warm in naughtiness*. For he treats not of those gross lusts, but without exempting any part of himself, he says that sin cleaves to him by nature. Now here is a question mooted, after what sort sin is conveyed from the parents to the children; which afterwards breeds another concerning the propagation of the soul, because many deny that the stain of the parents comes to the child, unless the soul be begotten of the substance of the soul. But lest we be driven to enter into these mazes, let it suffice us to know that Adam, after his fall, was bereft of all the gifts with which he had been adorned; and so when the reason was quenched which shone in him before, and the will was become stubborn, which erst was framed to the obedience of God, he was corrupted as well in mind as in heart, and consequently

begat children like himself. If any one make exception, that only bodies are begotten of bodies, and therefore that there is no alliance between soul and soul, the solution is, that forasmuch as God had not garnished Adam with the gifts of his spirit as some one individual man, but had conveyed into his person whatsoever he would should be common to all mankind, all of us are fallen in him from primeval perfection.

8 *Behold, thou hast loved, &c.*] This verse confirms what I said just now, that David did not refer his guiltiness to the time of his conception, to catch occasion of excuse, but rather that he might make it known that he was obnoxious to eternal death even from his childhood. Whence it follows that his whole life was exposed to condemnation. For so far is he off from transferring his fault to God, as some impure dogs do, who quarrel with him because he hath not given men another nature, that he rather sets his judgment against our corruption, as if he should say, As often as we come forth into God's sight, assured condemnation awaits us, because whereas we are born unto sin, God delighteth in righteousness and cleanness. Whence it must needs follow, that we are hateful to him. Howbeit, he speaks more forcibly when he avouches that God requireth not only that our life should be framed after some form of righteousness, but also that our heart should be pure, and thoroughly cleansed from all deceit; and in this respect he says that God requireth undefiledness in the inward parts; or, which implies as much, that not only he is offended with outward sins, but also that he requireth undefiled purity of the heart, so that he abhorreth secret filthiness. In the next verse he enhances his crime yet further; namely, that he could not excuse himself by pretence of ignorance, forasmuch as he had been sufficiently instructed as to his duty by God. The word *בסתר* is taken by many as if he should say that secret mysteries had been revealed unto him. And so, according to them, *in secret* is put for things that are hidden from man's understanding. But in my judgment, the darkness, or the secretness, or the hiding away that David speaks of, is referred not so much to the things themselves, as to his mind. For this member answers to the last; and therefore he confesses that he had not had a light taste of the heavenly doctrine, or been but sprinkled with it to outward appearance, but that it was thoroughly fixed in his heart. For God had taught him so familiarly, that he concealed nothing at all from him that was profitable to be known. Therefore was David the less to be excused; because, being so notably furnished with true understanding,

he had nevertheless given himself over to filthy lust like a brute beast, and afterwards, by sinning sundry ways, at length had become for the most part benumbed. We see what David aims at. For after he has confessed the heinousness of his offence, he acknowledges himself to be as it were wholly made up of sin: and, condemning his own nature, to excite deeper dread in his mind, he lays before him the judgment of God, and says that outward appearance bears no great sway there, but there is required perfect undefiledness. Furthermore he adds, that he is not one of the common sort, that he might come off with slight punishment by thrusting himself into the crowd; but that he is bound in greater guilt, because he was decked with singular gifts of the Spirit. Now let each man learn to apply this doctrine to himself, and when he feels the remorse of one sin, let him call other sins to mind also, so that he may prostrate himself wholly before God. Secondly, let him weigh how dreadful his judgment is; and, by comparing his own vanity with his rightfulness, let him feel himself to be utterly overwhelmed. And, lastly, let him add this as the crowning aggravation, that if he have been taught by God as one of his household, he is liable to so much the greater damnation, because he hath choked the light of the Holy Ghost, become a froward scholar, and trodden under his feet the many precious gifts wherewith he was garnished.

9 Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

10 Make me to hear of joy and gladness: the bones that thou hast broken shall rejoice.

11 Hide thy face from my sins, and strike out all mine offences.

9 *Thou shalt purge me, &c.*] He goes on with the same prayer; and this accumulation of words shews how careful he was to obtain forgiveness. Also he makes mention here of hyssop, alluding to the ceremonies of the law, not that he put his trust in the outward ceremony of cleansing, but because he knew there was nothing commanded in the law in vain. For inasmuch as sacrifices were in those days the seals of God's grace, he did right to seek assurance of his reconciliation in the same; like as it becomes us to store up our faith with the same props as often as our minds waver. David then desired no more than this, that that might be effectual and ratified in him which God had testified to his people.

And the same rule must we hold at this day: for although there be no cleansing to be sought for elsewhere than in the blood of Christ, yet as the spiritual grace is neither seen with eyes nor felt with hands, we cannot, but by the help of outward signs, with quiet minds resolve that God is favourable to us. What we have said of *hyssop*, let the same be applied to *washing* also. For the shadowy sprinklings which the Jews used under the law, bear witness that we are purged from all uncleanness, so that God is appeased, and accepteth us into his favour. Moreover, we know it to be the office of the Holy Ghost to wash our consciences inwardly with the blood of Christ, that our filthiness keep us not from access to God. Also the two verses are joined together; the drift of which is, that God should shew himself to be favourable to him. Some think that David's wishing to hear of gladness, is that there might be sent unto him some prophet as a messenger and witness of the reconciliation, but it seems to be too forced. Rather the tidings of gladness are taken indefinitely for assurance of favour. For by *the breaking of his bones* he means that he was worn out with extreme sorrow, so that his strength being exhausted and consumed, he almost fainted. Therefore he does well to desire that joy may be restored to him again, wherewith he may be quickened to a new life. And he says this joy is received by hearing, because that till the sinner be cheered by the word of God, so that he may gather heart again, it shall be to no purpose for him to procure himself other comforts. Therefore the very means to attain to peace and substantial gladness is to rest upon the promises of God. For howsoever they sooth themselves for the time, who, neglecting God's promises, go about to appease or to shun the terrors of conscience, certain it is that they are always grieved inwardly with secret torments. But howsoever these are benumbed, whosoever is touched earnestly with the fear of God, will wish none other remedy of his unquietness than this hearing of gladness; namely, when God promiseth that he hath done away our sin, and is become our friend. Now although the faithful be distressed with continual miseries as long as they are as pilgrims in the world, and sigh amid sundry fears, dangers, and troubles, yet the hearing alone of gladness is enough to assuage their sorrows, according as the joy of the spirit is inseparable from faith. Also this manner of speech is to be noted, where God is said to *hide his face from men's sins* when he remits them. For by and by is added, by way of exposition, *strike out mine offences*. And hereby we understand that we are then justified before God when he blotteth out our sins by

forgetting them of his own freewill, and that we are then clean when he vouchsafeth free pardon to us. Nevertheless here I must repeat that which I said before, that is, that when David requests but one thing of God, namely, to be received into favour, he heaps not so many words together for nothing, but expresses how carefully he seeks that which he had made it hard for himself to obtain. And certainly if a man pray but slightly for remission of his sins, he has not yet learned how horrible a thing it is to offend God; and therefore Solomon avouches them to be blessed that put themselves in fear, Prov. xxviii. 14, verily because the sadness which torments them opens them the gate to true joy. But here it is demanded, that seeing David had heard by the mouth of the prophet Nathan that his sin was taken away, 2 Sam. xii. 13, why he embraced not this absolution, that he might quietly enjoy true gladness; for he could not discredit the prophet without doing wrong to God. Like as at this day, God sendeth not his angels out of heaven, but holdeth it enough to comfort us by the voice of men, according as Christ saith, *That whatsoever his disciples shall loose upon earth, the same shall be loosed in heaven*; John xx. 23. And Paul, 2 Cor. v. 20, teaches that the ministers of the Gospel are sent as ambassadors to reconcile men unto God. Therefore it seems to be a token of unbelief in David, that after he had heard the voice of Nathan, he was still in perplexity and doubt, and sought for new assurance. There may be brought a double solution of this question. For it may be that Nathan did not forthwith promise that God was pacified, for it is no novelty in the scripture for those things to be joined together in the text which are not connected in time. Neither is it against reason, that after God had stricken his servant with that heaviness, it should be his pleasure to torment him awhile, to humble him the better. Thus David would report how sore he was scared, and what grievous torments he endured, when he was brought to the knowledge of his sin, before he received word of his forgiveness. Howbeit, it is not in the least repugnant to the nature of faith, that they who are already ascertained of the favour of God, should nevertheless continue earnestly and thoughtfully in craving forgiveness. Therefore, howsoever David were eased of some part of his sorrow, yet ceased he not to feel new compunctions from time to time, which might compel him to flee humbly and fearfully to God for mercy. For although God by promising us forgiveness freely allureth us to quietness, yet is it our duty to consider how sore we have offended him, that our sorrow may settle itself deep in our hearts. Besides this, the slender measure of our faith will

not suffer us to receive out of hand the fulness of the grace that is offered us. Wherefore it is no wonder though David, being straitened with distress, persevered in asking forgiveness three or four times, and offered himself oftentimes to God's sight, to assure himself the better. Yea, rather we must hold that we cannot earnestly pray God to forgive us when we have sinned, except we have first conceived by faith that he will be entreated. For who is he that durst open his mouth unless he were persuaded of his fatherly goodwill? But it behoves us always to begin our praying with a desire of forgiveness, whereby it appears that these two things are not repugnant to each other; namely, that when we have embraced God's grace by faith, we should nevertheless pray him to do away our sins. And to this reference is made in the form of praying left us by our heavenly master, in which at the commencement we call God our Father, and yet afterwards add that he should forgive us our trespasses: Matt. vi. 9. For although God forgive us wholly, yet the narrowness of our faith admits not his so large goodness, but must needs have it dropped into it by little and little. And therefore that we repeat one prayer oftentimes, is referred to the capacity of our faith, because although God be not assuaged by little and little, after the manner of men, yet the advances of our faith, which lead us unto full assurance, are slow. Furthermore, the term *purging with hyssop*, and *besprinkling*, warns us, that as often as we make our prayers for remission of sins, we must lift up our minds to that sacrifice wherewith Christ pacified his Father. For as the apostle teaches, Heb. ix. 22, sins are not remitted without bloodshed; and what God taught the people in old time under the figure of the law, that hath he more fully manifested by the coming of Christ. Therefore that the sinner may obtain grace, first let him turn his mind to the sacrifice of Christ, by which the sins of the world are purged. Afterwards let him call to him the holy supper and baptism, to confirm his faith withal. For it is not in anywise to be hoped that God, who is the judge of the world, will be reconciled to us but by the intervention of the price of the atonement.

12 A clean heart create in me, O God; and renew a right spirit in my bowels.

13 Cast me not away from thy face; and take not the Spirit of thy holiness from me.

14 Restore to me the joy of thy salvation; and establish me with thy free Spirit.

12 *A clean heart, &c.*] Hitherto David has prayed to obtain forgiveness of his sins; and now he desires to be endued again with the grace of the Holy Ghost, whereof he was deprived, or at least was worthy to be deprived. And it is to great purpose to distinguish these two prayers, which certain learned men confound improperly. Hitherto, therefore, he has treated of free remission of sins, and now he passes to newness of life. For inasmuch as he acknowledges himself worthy to be spoiled of all the gifts of the Holy Ghost, or rather feels himself to be stripped of a great part of them already, he with good reason sighs for a renewal of them. And by the word *create* he betokens that till he is miraculously renewed by the power of God, he shall be but as an useless trunk, by which title he commends the gift of repentance as he ought to do. The Sophists, although they deny not that we have need of the help of the Holy Ghost, and are forced to confess that we are furthered as well by the grace that goes before repentance, as by the grace that follows after, yet either diminish or darken God's glory, by setting man's reason in making choice, and his will in giving assent, in the middle room betwixt them. But David, by the word *create*, extols the glorious and singular work of God in renewing men, as if he should make them new again out of the mould. Moreover, forasmuch as he had been already endued with that Spirit, he requests that it may be renewed in him. Notwithstanding, he confessed first by the word *create* that whether God beget us again from the beginning, or whether he set us upon our feet again when we are fallen, whatsoever uprightness is in us, it is his free gift: for he requests not to have his weak heart helped, and his feeble spirit to be underpropped with some support, but he confesses that there is in his heart nothing right or clean, until the same come from elsewhere. Whence it follows, that the whole heart of man, when it is considered in its own nature, is crooked and untoward. For if there were any uprightness or cleanness in it by nature, David would not term the latter *the gift of the Spirit*, and the former *God's creation*. In the next verse he pursues the same request, and joins remission of sins with government of the spirit, according as it depends upon free reconciliation, that we be ruled by the spirit of adoption, as if God should cherish us in his lap as his children. Then, because he vouchsafeth to make none partakers of his Spirit, but such as he loveth and accounteth for his own, therefore David, that he may continue in possession of the Spirit, desires that the grace of adoption may abide with him unimpaired; for unless he have a place among

the children of God, he sees there is nothing left for him to trust to. Moreover, a man may gather from these words, that although the gifts of the Holy Ghost were stifled in him, yet were they not utterly taken away. And surely the thing itself shews, that the gifts wherein he excelled before were not quite exhausted: for he ceased not in the mean time to execute the duty of a king right nobly, and to give himself to prayer and other exercises of godliness, and to frame his life according to the religion of God. Therefore, although he were benumbed in one part, yet was he not given up to a reprobate mind. And surely he had not been so easily and suddenly awakened at the rebuke of the prophet Nathan, if there had not lain hid in his mind a secret seed of the fear of God. For whereas he prayed just now, that his spirit might be renewed, it must be restrained to a part. Which doctrine is profitable to be known, because certain learned men unadvisedly suppose, that if the elect fall into deadly sin, the Spirit of God is quenched in them, and they become strangers to God; whereas Peter affirms plainly that the word wherewith we be begotten anew, is an incorruptible seed; 1 Peter, i. 23. And John also teaches that the chosen are withheld, that they fall not quite away; 1 John, iii. 19. Albeit then that God now and then cast them off to outward appearance, yet doth he not so bereave them of all gifts, but that it appears at length that they were not utterly disinherited even at the time when the signs of grace shined not in them. If any man object, that David speaks doubtingly, as though he feared to be bereft of God's Spirit, I answer, that the faithful when they have sinned are worthily grieved, because they have rejected God's grace as much as in them lies; but yet that they must stand upon this point, that inasmuch as the seed of God is incorruptible, the grace wherewith they were once endued can never vanish away. So David, in considering his sin, was stricken with fear, and yet on the contrary part he believed, that because he was one of God's children, the thing remained to him still which he had lost by his own fault.

14 *Restore to me, &c.*] Once again he repeats that he will give himself to mourning until he have made his peace with God. And truly they are more than stupid that can give themselves to rest when God is displeased with them. David therefore teaches that there shall no rest come to him till the fatherly favour of God shine upon him. The second member has reference to the same object as the two former verses have; namely, that he might not be bereft of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, but continue in them unimpaired.

In the words there is some ambiguity: for some interpreters will have the verb *תַּסְמִכֵּנִי* to be of the third person, because the noun *רוּחַ* is of the feminine gender, and therefore they translate it, *let thy Spirit establish me*. But this diversity is of no great importance in respect of the sense. There is more difficulty in the epithet *נְדִיבָה*: for as the verb *נָדַב* signifies to deal bounteously, the Hebrews, by way of eminence, call princes *נְדִיבִים*. And therefore learned men suppose that David speaks here of a *principal* or *princely spirit*, according also as the Greek interpreters have translated it; and that this manner of praying did well beseem the person of David, who had need to excel in princely virtue for the executing of his charge, because he was created king. Now although this sense is not objectionable to me, nor suits ill with the context, yet I extend this sentence further: That David, acknowledging himself the bondslave of sin, and being hampered in his own guilt, sighs for the free and spontaneous spirit from which he was almost fallen away. For as he had brought himself in bondage to sin, he was not able to recover that inestimable gift of freedom but by the singular grace of God.

15 I will teach the wicked thy ways; and the ungodly shall be converted unto thee.

16 Deliver me from bloodsheds, O God, the God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing of thy righteousness joyfully.

17 Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

✓ 15 *I will teach, &c.*] Here he promises to become thankful to God if he will hear him; and he mentions the fruit of his thankfulness; namely, that he will endeavour that others by his example may amend. And surely not only the rule of charity commands that those whom the Lord hath lifted up should reach out their hand to others, but also the love of godliness, and the zeal for God's glory, ought to move them thus far, that, as much as in them lies, they should make all men partakers of the same grace. Furthermore, by joining the effect of conversion to his doctrine, he shews himself to hope that his labour shall be profitable. For although we oftentimes tell a tale to them that are deaf, when we endeavour to call wanderers back into the way, yet we do not always lose our labour, because the Lord blesseth his word.

16 *Deliver me from bloodsheds, &c.*] Hereby it appears

how little David flattered himself, and how hard an encounter he sustained against the terrors of death, that he recurs so often to desiring of forgiveness. Some take *blood-sheds* for the wrongful murder of Uriah, and the slaughter of the army, whereof David was guilty in his own conscience; but I approve it not. For as by *blood* the Hebrews signify any manner of deadly crime, he seems rather to confess himself worthy the punishment of death, that he may shew that his only remaining hope is in the mercy of God. And the righteousness of God, which he says he will set forth joyfully, is taken for his goodness. For the title of righteousness is not attributed to God because he is rigorous in executing vengeance, as it is commonly supposed, but rather because he is faithful in making good his promises, and in maintaining the welfare of his servants, and never disappointeth the wretched souls, whosoever they are, that call upon him for help. Now, when he says *O God, the God of my salvation*, there is in this repetition a latent emphasis, or vehemence: whence we gather also that always with fear and sorrowful sighing he considered what he had deserved. In the meanwhile he shews himself to be so vexed with unquietness, and to burn with longing, that nevertheless he is furnished with the armour of faith, because he believes that his salvation is laid up in God. To the same purpose makes also the next verse, where he prays that his lips may be opened, which imports as much as that matter of praise should be ministered to him. I know that this passage is wont to be expounded as though David should wish his tongue to be directed by God's Spirit, so that he might be meet to set forth his praises; and truly, except God minister words to us, we shall be altogether dumb. But David meant another thing, namely, that now he is after a sort dumb, until he be called to thanksgiving by obtaining forgiveness. He seems to me to request that his lips may be opened, in the same sense that he says in another place that a new song was put into his mouth: Ps. xl. 4. And so again he avouches that he will be thankful to God, and mindful of his benefits, because he desires not to be received into favour to any other end than to be a loud proclaimer of God's grace among all men. For it is an emphatic manner of speaking to say, *My mouth shall shew forth thy praise*, as if he should promise that he will give thanks to God with a loud and clear voice.

18 For thou wilt not accept sacrifice: and though I should give thee a burnt-offering, it shall not please thee.

19 The sacrifices of God are a troubled spirit : thou, O God, wilt not despise a troubled and broken heart.

20 Be favourable of thy good pleasure unto Sion : build up the walls of Jerusalem.

21 Then shalt thou accept the sacrifices of righteousness, even burnt-offerings and oblations : then shall calves come upon thine altar.

18 *For thou wilt not accept, &c.*] In this place he teaches that although he render no recompense to God, yet upon trust of his free mercy he hopes assuredly that he will be entreated by him. And first of all he confesses that he comes helpless and empty to him, which nevertheless shall not hinder his obtaining his suit, because God accepteth not sacrifices. And it is not to be doubted but that by a tacit comparison he rebukes the gross error of the common people, which we know to have reigned almost in all ages among the Jews. For whereas the law taught that sins were to be cleansed with sacrifices, to the intent that, distrusting their own works, they should seek satisfaction at Christ's hands only, they came forth boldly with their sacrifices, as if they should redeem themselves from God's judgment by paying a ransom. Certain it is, that this untoward presumption is derided by David, when he denies that he has aught at all wherewith to make atonement to God, who is not delighted in sacrifices. Indeed God bade that sacrifices should be offered to him, and David did in nowise neglect that service; therefore he speaks not irrespectively, as though God rejected the sacrifices which were offered by his own command, or as though any man might have omitted them as superfluous; but rather, as we have seen awhile ago, David and all the congregation of the godly were helped by the ceremonies of the law. But he had an eye to the end only, because hypocrites, being blinded with evil presumption, imagined that they earned God's favour. Therefore, although he exercised himself diligently in sacrifices, (even as no man can look to have favour but he that sets betwixt God and himself the only sacrifice of Christ, whereby the sins of the world are purged,) yet it was truly and worthily avouched by him that he brings no recompense, because he sought to have reconciliation of free gift. Nor indeed, to speak properly, did the Jews, in slaying their sacrifices, bring anything of their own, but rather borrowed that of Christ which is wanting to all mortal men, that is, the price of their redemption; and so conse-

quently the sacrifices of the law were in respect of men merely passive.

19 *The sacrifices of God, &c.*] After that he has bereft sacrifices of the power of purchasing God's favour, which the Jews had falsely attached to them, now he says that although he brought nothing with him but a sorry and humbled heart, the same suffices God abundantly, because he requireth no more of sinners than that they should cast themselves prostrate before him, and crave mercy at his hand. And it is not for nought that he has used the plural number, but that he might express that the one only sacrifice of repentance suffices instead of all sacrifices. If he had said that this was a sacrifice of sweet savour, the Jews would have been ready to cavil, that, notwithstanding, there were other sacrifices which pleased God no less; according as we see the papists at this day mingle their own works with God's grace, lest forgiveness of sins should be a free gift. David therefore, to exclude all invented satisfactions, avouches purposely that the humbling only of the heart comprehends in it whatsoever sacrifices God alloweth. And whereas he names them the sacrifices of God, he seems indirectly to taunt the hypocrites, who like no sacrifices but such as are of their own appointing, which they imagine to be able to win God's favour. Still here arises a difficult question. For if the sorrowful heart be accounted instead of all sacrifices before God, it will follow that we obtain forgiveness by repentance; and if that be true, then ceases it to be of free gift. I answer, that David discusses not here what price men pay to God, or for what desert they obtain forgiveness of sins, but rather by opposing an afflicted spirit to counterfeit recompenses, he meant to detect the nakedness of men; according also as the casting down of the heart tends to none other purpose but to abase man or to bring him to nothing. For it cannot be but that our mind must lift up itself to some presumption when we leave anything remaining in ourselves. Whence it follows that where the heart is broken there all deservings lie prostrate, so that men bring nothing to offer in exchange. If any one make exception, that faith is a more excellent sacrifice, and of greater force to pacify God, because it brings forth Christ with the true and substantial peace-making or atonement; first, it is to be considered that faith cannot be separated from this lowliness of which David speaks. For although the ungodly are cast down with fear before God, yet they foster a froward stubbornness inwardly, and cease not to fret and murmur; and although they foam not out their presumption openly, yet their heart continues ever heaving. Since

therefore the spirit of affliction and the broken or sorry heart do not only with true fear and misgiving subdue the man that is wounded with a sense of God's wrath, but also thoroughly mortify him, so that he is nobody in his own conceit, but fetches his whole salvation from God's mercy, it is no marvel that David avouches God to be contented with this one sacrifice. For he neither separates faith from it, nor reckons up the parts of repentance, but only teaches that we obtain not favour with God otherwise than at such time as, being cast down and confounded in ourselves, we rest only upon his mercy, when we come before him humbly with hearty and unfeigned acknowledgment of our own nakedness; and finally, when we lie bowed and broken, that he may lift us up.

20 *Be favourable, &c.*] Now he prays not for himself alone, but unites the whole church with him, and not without cause. For he had done all he could that the whole kingdom of Christ might come to nought. For being anointed king to gather God's church together, he had by his shameful revolting dispersed it, so that the utter destruction of it was to be feared. Although he had by his offence, as much as lay in him, overthrown God's church, yet he requests that it may be restored again by God's free mercy. And he alleges not other men's innocence, but only leans upon God's good pleasure; as if he should say, that when the church is fallen, the restoration thereof is not elsewhere to be hoped for, than the free mercy of God. Now although Jerusalem were then already built, yet prays he still for the building of it; namely, because it was not yet come to its full perfection, inasmuch as there wanted the chief part of it. For David had an eye to the oracles in which God had promised that the abiding-place of the ark should be settled there, and secondly, also the royal seat; and therefore the temple yet unbuilt, was but as a cottage. Howbeit, this place teaches that it is the peculiar work of God to build the church, according as it is said in another place, *The foundations thereof are in the holy mountains*, Psalm lxxxvii. 1. For David had not a respect to the outward building only, but he set his mind chiefly upon God's spiritual sanctuary, which cannot be built by the hand and cunning of men. True it is, that how much soever stones and mortar men heap together, yet shall they profit nothing by their pain in building earthly walls. But the rearing of God's church is a peculiar matter, which being founded upon earth by the wonderful working of God, is raised above the heavens. Furthermore, the subject here is not about one month, or one year's building only, but that God

should preserve the state of his church in safety even unto the coming of Christ. But seeing that David, both in the beginning of the Psalm, and in the whole context, has professed himself to be forlorn and past recovery; whence comes now this so sudden and so great boldness that he hesitates not to commend the whole church to God? For how shall he carry all other men up into heaven who has hardly escaped from hell? Truly we see here that as soon as we are reconciled to God, not only every man has free liberty to pray for his own welfare, but also we are admitted to be suitors for others; or rather, which is more honourable, it is lawful for us to commend the glory of Christ's kingdom, which is more precious than the welfare of the whole world.

21 *Then shalt thou accept, &c.*] Here at the first blush there occurs some appearance of discrepancy, but such as is easily dissipated. He had said that sacrifices of themselves were of no value; and now, inasmuch as they are exercises of faith, and avouchments of repentance and thanksgiving, he says they shall be acceptable to God. And he calls them *sacrifices of righteousness*, in express terms; that is, right and lawful sacrifices, which are duly offered by the appointment of God. A form of speaking which he has also used in Psalm iv. 6, when deriding the vain pomps of those who took pride in the deceitful title of them only. And once again he encourages himself to thankfulness, and by his own example exhorts all the godly that when they have obtained their desire, they should not only consider God's gracious goodness secretly with themselves, but also publish it in open assembly. To the general name of sacrifice he joins two species; and although some will have the words כָּלִיל and עֹלָה to be both of one signification, yet I like better their opinion who think that the first word is distinctly put for the sacrifice of the priests, because the offering in that was burned. Nevertheless, by this variety David means that God liketh none of the ceremonies of the law, save when they are referred to their rightful end. Some take all this whole verse metaphorically, applying it to the kingdom of Christ; but it is too refined and constrained. I confess that Hosea, xiv. 3, calls praises wherein thanks are rendered to God, *the calves of men's lips*. But it is evident enough, that here the solemn ceremonies wherewith the worshippers of God professed their devotion, are joined with the pure affection of the heart.

PSALM LII.

When upon the slaughter of Ahimelech and the rest of the priests, all the people were everywhere stricken with fear, so that no man durst succour David; and that Doeg triumphed in the success of his wicked talebearing; the holy man David, nevertheless raising his spirits by faith, made this Psalm; wherein he rails at the cruel treachery of the wicked talebearer, and encourages himself to hope well, because God sitteth a just judge in heaven, both to succour his servants that cast all their hopes upon him, and also to be avenged of the pride of them that despise him and take leave to themselves to do whatsoever they lust.

[To the chief chanter. An Instruction of David.]

2 At what time Doeg the Edomite came and brought Saul tidings, and had told him that David came into the house of Ahimelech.

As concerning the word מַשְׁכִּיל we have already heretofore told you, that it is wont properly to be inscribed upon Psalms, when David declares that he is chastised by the hand of God, or at least is warned by some kind of affliction, to profit as it were under the rod of a schoolmaster; whereof we have had examples in Psalms xxxii, and xlii. But there was a different reason in Psalm xlv; namely, that the readers might know that in that song of love there is no wantonness, but that there is described the holy and spiritual wedlock of Christ and his church. But unto this Psalm, and the Psalms following, instruction that proceeds from correction is applicable. For I doubt not but that David's meaning is, that he was tried and examined after no ordinary manner at that time, that he might learn to resign himself wholly to God. And the story is known, that when David wandered like an outlaw, he came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest, and because he durst not discover his danger, he feigned that the king had sent him with secret commission about certain weighty affairs. By means whereof he obtained both victuals and the sword with which he had slain Goliath. But Doeg, who was over the king's shepherds, seeking to obtain the favour of Saul by a wicked accusation, kindled the rage of the tyrant, not only against that one guiltless man, but also against all the priests. By means whereof it came to pass that all access was closed against the wretched outlaw. For the terrible example of that cruelty had so cut the hearts of all men,

that none durst shew him any office of courtesy. Now, because Doeg, glorying in his iniquity, behaved himself insolently, and that the reward which he had gotten for his treachery might be as a spur to others to contend in their efforts to destroy David, the holy man lifting up himself aloft by holy comfort, reproves his accursed boldness.

3 Why boastest thou of thy naughtiness, thou mighty fellow? the goodness of God endureth daily.

4 Thy tongue reckoneth up thy mischievous deeds; working deceit like a sharp razor.

5 Thou lovest naughtiness better than goodness; to speak untruth rather than righteousness. Selah.

6 Thou lovest all words of sliness, thou deceitful tongue.

3 *Why boastest thou, &c.*] When the treason of that wicked man Doeg had taken effect according to his desire, it was, as I said, a sore and severe temptation, that might well smite through the soul of David. And therefore I doubt not but he armed himself to the encounter with this holy boasting. And first of all he enhances the crime of Doeg, in that he exults in the power he had obtained by heinous villany. Neither is it any strange thing that a sheepreeve should be honoured with so high a title. For he was not a herdsman that served for hire in keeping flocks, but he was appointed master of the shepherds with authority, much after the same manner as there are in these days chief-masters of the equeries. He says, therefore, that there is no reason why Doeg should flatter himself in his greatness, seeing that he shamefully abuses the same to cruelty and wickedness; nor to be proud of the king's new favour, which he has purchased by wicked slander, for uprightness alone is the faithful preserver of power and dignity. But no tyrannical violence, no treachery or wrongfulness, is lasting. In the second member he expresses more clearly how it comes to pass that the ungodly are so infuriate and blind, that shaking off the fear of God, and banishing shame, they dare sooth themselves in their own naughtiness; that is, because, scorning such as are despised and brought low, they imagine they may do what they list to them; for they think them unworthy that God should take any care of them. Nay rather, accounting God's providence, whereby he preserveth his servants, to be a thing of nought, they warrant themselves an endless liberty of

sinning. On the contrary part, David rises up with holy boldness, upbraiding these presumptuous sons of earth, because they yield no honour to God's goodness. Howbeit, as God's gracious goodness flows not always with equal course, but rather seems sometimes to be removed far from us by some great obstacles, David fortifies himself against this temptation, saying, that it flourishes every day. For I doubt not but he means that the many interruptions of it hinder not, but that God reneweth the assurances of his goodness from time to time. And by so saying he shews himself to hope for that hereafter which he has had experience of before, because God is not so wearied with helping his servants, and relieving their miseries, but that howsoever he suffer them to be afflicted with adversity a hundred times, he will always be ready to help them.

4 *Thy tongue reckoneth up, &c.*] David does not as commonly men are wont when they are wrongfully harmed; for he bursts not out into railing to avenge himself, but accusing his enemy before God, he thence gathers matter of comfort. For the more frowardly evil men run riot, so much the more is it certain that they kindle God's wrath. Whence redounds excellent comfort to us, that then is the ripe time of deliverance at hand, when they that assault our welfare wrongfully, abandon themselves to every excess of depravity. David rehearses not in this place the reproaches of his adversary, wherewith to blacken him among men; but setting God's judgment before his eyes, he encourages himself to entertain cheering hopes against the horrible injuries he had suffered. Furthermore, although Doeg were a cruel and bloody man, yet in this place is reprov'd principally his inward wickedness, for that he had by his secret accusation treacherously and fraudulently betrayed the guiltless priests, and therefore he likens his tongue to a sharp razor; like as also in Ps. cxx. 2, all venomous tongues are said to be like sharp arrows. Many refer the words *working deceit* to the razor, because it cuts insidiously, and not with an open stroke, as a sword; and this is the reason of the comparison. But it seems to me that the construction will be the fitter, if this epithet be joined to *the tongue*. As the word בלע, which they translate *destruction*, signifies *a hiding*, this latter sense pleased me best. For David seems to allude to the drawing away of the tongue, which is the beginning of swallowing. And it is a becoming metaphor that Doeg's tongue licked up untrue words to swallow up simple and guiltless persons. Finally, David means nothing else by these verses, but to seek confirmation of his hope from the extreme and desperate mischievousness of his

enemy, that he might look more certainly for deliverance at God's hand.

7 Even God shall destroy thee for ever ; he shall take hold of thee, and pluck thee out of thy tent, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

8 And the righteous shall see and fear ; and they shall laugh upon him.

9 Behold the man that took not God for his strength ; but trusted in the multitude of his riches, and strengthened himself in his naughtiness.

7 *Even God shall destroy thee, &c.*] He shews more plainly that which I touched upon just now, that the end to which he enhanced the crime of Doeg was that he might with the more assurance denounce to him his judgment at hand, and that not so much to put Doeg in fear, as to raise up his own hope. Therefore he gathers, that although God hold his hand for a time, yet will he not suffer so heinous a treason to remain unpunished for ever. Now as nothing is more stubborn than the ungodly as long as they prosper, and as they despise and scorn God's judgments because they think themselves out of reach of harm, their power makes even the godly afraid, who, beholding them fortified with strong helps, are almost bereft of life. The prophet confirms one sentence with many words, that he may persuade himself the better in a thing that is hard to be believed. David therefore, pouring scorn upon the recklessness of the proud man, with this accumulation of words, *God shall confound thee, destroy thee, pluck thee out, root thee up, and despatch thee away*, raises up his own mind to hope well, and chastises his own fearfulness ; as if he should say, Although Doeg have taken deep root, and his strength be settled, yet shall God be strong enough and to boot, to pluck him up. The same purpose serves what he says, *He shall pluck him out of his tent, and from the land of the living* ; namely, that although the ungodly nestle themselves and hide them snugly in their tents, because they think no mischance is able to pierce thither, and glory of endless possession of life ; yet shall they be suddenly cast down, when the ripe time of God's wrath cometh. Nevertheless it may be, that in the word *tent* he alluded to the person of Doeg, because shepherds and herdsmen were wont to dwell in tents.

8 *And the righteous, &c.*] He reasons also from the end that it is not possible that Doeg should escape the punish-

ment which he hath deserved; namely, because God executeth his judgment to this end, that he may purchase himself the more reverence among the faithful, and cheer them up with proofs of his justice. For although the destruction of Doeg should be a spectacle even to the reprobates also and the despisers of God, yet are there two causes for which he restraineth the beholding thereof peculiarly to the righteous only. For the reprobates are blind even in the manifest works of God, so that it is no marvel though they profit nothing in his judgments. And therefore David rightly says that the righteous shall see it, for they have eyes to see. Now comes the other reason; namely, that God, for his elect's sake, that he may testify the sollicitude he feeleth in maintaining their welfare, blunteth the fierceness of the ungodly, and so turneth their sorrow into joy. Therefore it is no marvel if David call upon them as witnesses, for whose sake peculiarly God exhibiteth such a spectacle. Fear in this place signifies not the horror wherewith the vengeance of God oftentimes striketh men down and maketh them aghast, but it is taken for the joyous and cheerful reverence of the faithful, when they perceive themselves to be so highly esteemed before God that he taketh their causes in hand, and setteth himself against their enemies. For as long as they are exposed to wrong, they perceive not that God is their avenger; and they are agitated with many doubts, as though he had no care at all of ruling the world. But the experience of his justice raises up their slumbering minds to the earnest following of godliness. And this fear in no wise hinders the laughter which David adds immediately after. For these two things agree very well together; namely, that the faithful should submit themselves reverently unto God, whom they know to be the avenger of wrongful cruelty; and that they should conceive ineffable joy, seeing that he standeth on their side, because when he vouchsafeth to take part with us, to maintain our quarrel as well as we, this fellowship with him is more precious than all triumphs. The beautiful play upon the Hebrew words *beholding* and *fearing* cannot be expressed in Latin: the prophet meant to denote by it that the *beholding* of which he speaks should not be idle but workful.

9 *Behold the man, &c.*] Some think that this was bruited abroad as a by-word concerning the pride of Doeg. But this seems too straitened. I rather take it to be an exposition of *the fear* and *the laughter*, because David meant to express in what manner the faithful profit in God's judgments. For the disappointing of the ungodly puts them in mind that pride must be patiently borne with, which falls by its own

sway. Again, it trains them also to modesty, that they may not be puffed up with the like vanity, and wax insolent towards God and man. David then avouches that the faithful shall laugh at the destruction of the wicked, not only so as to triumph over them, but so that they may keep themselves quiet under God's protection, and willingly submit themselves to him, bidding the enticements of the world farewell. Therefore as often as we meet with such examples, God draweth back to himself our thoughts, which otherwise are too forward to wander, that he may possess them alone. Moreover the adverb *behold* is taken here demonstratively, as if David should produce upon a stage the miserable end that awaits the proud despisers of God; according as it is no small point of wisdom to gather by one example, that they are all miserable, and appointed to a horrible destruction, that put their trust in anything but God. But these two members, *He took not God for his strength, and he trusted in the multitude of his riches*, must be read jointly. For David means that men never lean upon God unfeignedly till, being aware of their own helplessness, they empty themselves of everything. For as long as they imagine that aught remains in themselves, it is not possible that they should mount unto God. And so this is an invariable principle, that as much as men challenge to themselves so much take they away from God, and they that trust in their own riches take not God for their strength. And what David avouches concerning one particular, the same is extended to all; as often as men's minds grovel in the world and worldly helps, many hindrances have they that keep them back from seeking God. The word *חַוֵּה*, which the greater part of interpreters translate *malice* or *naughtiness*, and which some also take actively for *mischief* or *destruction*, seems in this place to denote rather *substance*. For we know that nothing is more common with David than to repeat one thing in diverse words. Therefore the text will flow very well thus: that the man who trusts in his riches, and is strengthened in his own substance, or in his own *being*, as they term it, defrauds God of his due honour.

10 As for me, I shall be as a green olive in the house of God; I have trusted in the goodness of God for ever and aye.

11 I will always praise thee, for thou hast done it: I will wait upon thy name, because it is good before thy meek ones.

10 *As for me, &c.*] After David, being raised up on high

on the wings of faith and hope, has magnanimously looked down upon the splendour of Doeg's wealth, by which, according to the carnal understanding, he was overwhelmed, he himself also rises up out of his miseries. And though he lies prostrate like a useless and decayed trunk, yet through the hope of future restoration he compares himself to an olive. And surely there could no comfort have redounded to David from the destruction of Doeg, except he had been persuaded that the vengeance that was taken upon the man's cruelty, which he had practised against the innocents, was taken by God. David therefore reputed God to be the avenger of the harms that he had suffered unworthily, promises himself the thing that was to ensue, that is, that he should gather new strength and flourish again. Notwithstanding he shews, at the same time, that he will take this for the chief point of his prosperity, that is, to be enrolled among the worshippers of God, and to have a place among them so that he may exercise himself in the profession of godliness, according as we have heretofore seen that it was more bitter to him to be banished from God's sanctuary than to wander in dens of wild beasts, bereft of his wife and of all the goods that he had. Some will have it that there is a tacit antithesis conveyed in the person of Doeg, because under guileful pretence, as though he had been a devout worshipper of God, he came to the tabernacle but to spy; but this is founded on a far-fetched conjecture. Rather David sets himself as well against Doeg as against all his enemies, that although he, being now as an outlaw from the holy land, want the sight of the tabernacle, yet he hopes for restitution, when the hypocrites shall be plucked up, who not only possess that place, but also enjoy the temple alone, which they do but defile and pollute with their filthiness. Here therefore let us call to mind that which has been mentioned before; namely, that we must always look that we live to none other end than to be accounted among the flock of God, and because our infirmity has need of outward helps, that it is to be accounted as a most singular benefit that we may frequent holy assemblies, where the faithful stir up one another to worship God and to call upon him. Besides this, as God is one, so also, that we may be one in him, he gathereth us together into the hope of a blessed eternity by the common sacraments, and will have all men to praise his name with one mouth. Then by the example of David let us learn to prefer our place in God's church before all delusions. A reason is added why he shall be like a flourishing olive; namely, because he hath trusted in the goodness of God; for I supply the word *for*: and after this

manner he follows up the antithesis which I touched upon just now, that although his enemies flourished, and spread out their boughs afar, and vaunted themselves in their towering loftiness, yet should their root wither away soon, because it was not fastened in God's goodness; and therefore, while they dried up, he should never want sap and strength, because he reposed his hope in God. Moreover, because he might have been consumed with the long succession of miseries if he should not extend the constancy of his trust to a long time, he declares expressly that he had not set God any certain time, but had embraced eternity in his anticipations. For he could not have hoped for ever, without placing both his life and his death freely at the disposal of God; whereby we perceive what it is that puts a difference between God's lawful children and the hypocrites. For although both of them are mingled together in the church, as wheat is mingled with chaff upon the floor, yet the hope of the one strengthens them continually in their standing, while the others are scattered abroad like chaff by their own vanity.

11 *I will always, &c.*] He concludes the Psalm with this thanksgiving, which he says he renders heartily and unfeignedly, because he acknowledges it to be the work of God, which is a point worth remarking. For such niggards of praise are men, that although they testify some thankfulness with their mouth, yet scarcely the hundredth person earnestly considers and weighs God's benefits, so that he believes him to be the author of them. David therefore concludes that his escape from the hand of Doeg, and that he had not perished a hundred times afterwards, could not possibly have come so to pass unless he had been shielded by the help of God; and he promises to be thankful not for one day only, but evermore, or all his life long. And whereas in all other duties of godliness it becomes the children of God to endeavour that they may hold out to the end, in this behalf they have especial need to be earnest with themselves; because forgetfulness steals easily upon men, and the greater part also, thinking that they have done a great matter when they have employed three days in praises, forthwith bury in forgetfulness what ought to be had in everlasting memory. Lastly, he says that his hope shall be yoked with thankfulness. For to wait for the hand of God is nothing else but to wait patiently for his grace although it be hidden, and to depend upon his promise although the effect thereof be delayed for a long time. And that he may do it with the better courage, he denies that his hope shall be in vain. *Because the name of God is*

good before the faithful. Some take these words neutrally, that it is good to hope, as in Psalm cxviii. 8. But in my judgment the other sense is more simple; namely, that God never disappointeth his faithful ones, but sheweth his goodness to them manifestly. Therefore, although the name of God be hateful to the unbelievers, yea, and strike a terror into them as often as it sound in their ears, because they have no feeling of his goodness; David says that the faithful have evermore felt by continual experience, how sweet and pleasant the name of God is. Now that the children are called *meek ones*, because they ought to resemble their heavenly father in humanity and beneficence, I have told you already in Psalm xvi. 3.

PSALM LIII.

Because this Psalm is in a manner the same as the fourteenth, let the exposition of it be fetched from thence.

[*To the chief chanter upon Mahalath. An Instruction of David.*]

2 The fool said in his heart, There is no God. They have corrupted and done abominable wickedness; there is none that doeth good.

3 God looked out from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that would understand and seek after God.

4 Every man is gone back; they are rotten altogether; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

5 Do not all the workers of iniquity know? Eating my people, they eat bread; they call not upon the Lord.

6 There they trembled for fear, where no fear was; for God hath scattered the bones of him that encamped against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them.

7 Who shall give salvation to Israel out of Sion? When the Lord shall have turned the captivity of his people, then shall Jacob rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

PSALM LIV.

In this Psalm David rehearses the prayers that he made to God when he understood that he was betrayed by the Zyp hæans, by means whereof he was fallen into the most imminent peril of his life. And in this wise he shews the invincible strength of his faith, that although death was placed before his eyes, yet ceased he not to call upon God.

[To the chief chanter in Neginoth. An Instruction of David.]

2 When the Zyp hæans came and said unto Saul,
Is not David hidden among us ?

That David frequently sought covert in that part of the wilderness which was next to the Zyp hæans, is known from the sacred history. And it appears by 1 Sam. xxiii. 11. xxvi. 1, that he was twice betrayed by those that bordered on them. Not without cause therefore does he note this circumstance of time, to the intent we may know he was never so dismayed with any miseries, but he rose up unto God by hope. Surely it was a proof of rare and heroic courage, that being hemmed in on all sides with the hosts of his enemies, so that which way soever he stirred his foot he saw destruction meeting him in the face, he was notwithstanding not overwhelmed with despair, but came forth out of that deep darkness to call upon God for help. For he could not have so prayed unless he had been persuaded that it is as easy a matter for God to raise a dead man out of his grave, as to keep him alive and safe in the state he was in ; since now nothing remained, but that he should give up the ghost in the gloomy recesses of the cavern.

3 Save me, O God, in thy name, and judge me in thy power.

4 O God, hear my prayer, and hearken to the words of my mouth.

5 For strangers are risen up against me, and the terrible ones have sought my soul ; they have not set God before them. Selah.

3 *Save me, O God, &c.*] Because we know that David was at that time destitute of all human help and succour, we must conceive an antithesis between *God's name* and *power*, and

all means, as they say, by which men are wont to be helped. For although there be no help without God, yet hath he ordinary means by which to put forth his grace and power towards us. And when he hath so abandoned us as that there appears no help under heaven, then he worketh by himself. David therefore, as there was no hope remaining in creatures, with good reason flees to this holy sanctuary, that holding himself contented with the working of God only, he trusted to be saved by miracle. Howbeit, in the second member, by calling God his judge or advocate to plead his cause for him, he thus avouches his own innocence. And truly, that God may take upon him to defend us, we must above all things endeavour to have a good and a clear conscience. For there is nothing more untoward than to presume rashly to call upon him, as if he were a maintainer of bad causes. David therefore is encouraged to seek deliverance, by the goodness of his cause and the clearness of his conscience. For as he puts his innocence to the trial of God's judgment, he doubts not but he will be favourable to him, and at the same time a strict judge in punishing the falsehood and cruelty of his enemies.

4 *O God, hear my prayer, &c.*] In these words he expresses the earnestness of his affection. And no doubt he prayed heartily and with great earnestness, as he was distressed with so great necessity. For it cannot be but that words should break forth out of a troubled mind. And that does he declare in the next verse, where he complains that he has to deal with barbarous and savage men, whom no fear of God restrains from performance of their wickedness. Neither does he this because God hath need of a remembrancer, but by relating the cause of his own fear and unquietness, he unburdens his cares into his bosom. Furthermore, whether he means, by the name of *strangers*, the Zephæans only, or joins the whole host of Saul to them, he seems to me thereby to blame the outrageous barbarity of them. Many suppose that they are called *strangers* because they were degenerate sons of Abraham, and by casting away the regard of godliness had revolted to the heathenish corruptions of the Gentiles. And I confess that the prophets often call the Jews *strangers*, because they had banished themselves from God's church, by their ungodly and wicked life. But I think that this passage has another meaning. For as neighbourhood is wont to move even enemies to some gentleness, David, to aggravate the cruelty of those at whose hands he had been no less roughly handled than any unknown person, or one that had been born almost in another world, says that *strangers* had assaulted him, meaning

that they ran upon him with the fury of beasts. To which purpose pertains also the second epithet, *dreadful ones*. For they that translate it *strong* or *sturdy ones*, too much diminish the horribleness of the thing. The meaning then is, that David's enemies, casting away all sense of humanity, rushed upon him to destroy him like a sort of enraged wild beasts. Wherefore it is no marvel if he were so dismayed that he fled fearfully to the protection of God. And they are said *to seek a man's soul*, whose cruelty being content with no moderate harming, cannot be satisfied but by death. And that he may express their unbridled rage the better, he says they have no regard of God, because the only bridle wherewith they might have been restrained, was if they had called to mind that there sitteth a judge of the world in heaven, before whose judgment-seat all men must one day render an account of their life; but when the remembrance of God was once shaken off, there was no room left for moderation.

6 Behold, God is my helper: the Lord is among them that bear up my soul.

7 He shall reward evil to mine adversaries; cut them up in thy truth.

8 I will offer sacrifice to thee willingly; I will praise thy name, O Lord, because it is good.

9 For he hath delivered me out of all distress; and mine eye hath seen in mine adversaries.

6 *Behold, God is my helper, &c.*] This verse teaches us that David cast not forth his prayers into the air at a venture, but that he prayed out of the lively feeling of faith. And the demonstrative adverb *behold* has great force in it. But seeing he could not lie hid, no not among wild beasts, where was this nearness of God? seeing that the darkness of death overwhelmed him, plunged as he was in a manner in the grave, how could he behold God present, and as it were point to him with his finger? seeing he looked tremblingly for destruction every moment, how could he boast of God's present and assured aid? Then must it needs be that he excelled wonderfully in strength of faith, whereby surmounting so many obstacles, he penetrated even from hell itself to God. And when he reckons God among the defenders of his soul, he means not simply that he is but one of them; for he would give him but small honour to place him in the degree of men, and it were better to make no mention at all of him, than so to degrade him; but rather he means that God was on their side who were concerned for

his welfare, of which sort was Jonathan, and such others. But as those were but few in number, and weak, and fearful, yet maintains he himself with this trust, that as God was their governor and guide, they would be stronger than all the ungodly. Perhaps also he alludes to his own nakedness. For as he was destitute of all men's help, this expression may be resolved in suchwise, as though he had said that the maintenance of God alone was as good to him as countless numbers.

7 *He shall reward evil, &c.*] Because the word ישיב imports as much as *to make to return*, he seems not only to threaten punishment, but also therewith to denote the kind of punishment; namely, that God will retort their wicked devices, malicious stratagems, and base practices, upon their own heads. Now although I disallow not the opinion of them that take the verb of the future tense in the sense of wishing, yet I like better to keep still the proper sense of it, that David having as it were obtained his desire, should calmly wait for the thing that he prayed for. And we see him oftentimes to break off the thread of his praying by interposing such sentences, that he may prick himself forward the more sharply, and quicken his zeal to persevere. Wherefore it is no absurdity that with praying he mingles this sentence, that God will be a just avenger to repay the ungodly and wicked persons their reward. Furthermore it avails not a little to the confirmation of hope, that God's *own truth* should be set before him. For unless, in the storms of temptations, we believed assuredly that God, who claims to himself the charge of our welfare, is truthful, and flattereth not his servants with vain words, our minds would quail as often as he delayeth or discontinueth his help. Therefore not without good reason does David stay his hope of obtaining upon this point, that God can no more fly from his engagement, than he can deny himself.

8 *I will offer sacrifice, &c.*] According to his wont he promises to be mindful of God's gracious goodness when he shall be delivered. And no doubt he promises that he will render solemn thanks to God, as soon as it shall be in his power to do it. For although God be content with the inward affection, yet ought not David to neglect the customs appointed in the law; therefore he testified his mindfulness of the benefit, with sacrifices, according as the common duty of the godly required, to the intent he might also stir up others by the example of himself. And he says he will do it freely, not only because it was free for every man to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving at his own pleasure, but also because, being now clear of dangers, he will pay his vow willingly

and with a cheerful heart. For we know that the greater part of the world, when they are distressed with any necessity, promise largely enough that they will be obedient unto God; but by and by, when they are escaped, they relapse into their natural disposition, and forget God's gracious goodness. David therefore vows freewill offerings, that he may put a difference between himself and hypocrites, who submit not themselves to God but after a slavish sort, and by constraint of fear. We may learn therefore by this passage, to bring free hearts with us as often as we come forth into the sight of God, if we covet to have him approve of our service. The latter member must, together with the last verse, be referred to a happy and quiet time. For although he indited the whole Psalm after his deliverance, yet he has hitherto recounted what form of praying he had used when he was yet travelling in danger. And now being relieved and free from all sorrow, he adds to it a new giving of thanks. And it may be, that taking warning by one example, he gathered as it were into one parcel several of God's benefits which he had had experience of at divers times before, and therefore he pronounces generally that God's name is good, and that he himself is rid of all distress. What is meant by this *seeing*, I have told you heretofore in Psalm xxxv: for this manner of speech denotes a sweet and delightful beholding. If any man demand whether it be lawful for the children of God to covet earnestly such a sight, when God punisheth wickedness; the answer is easy; yes, if their eyes are pure so as to delight after a godly and holy manner in the records of God's justice; but if they are infected with any wicked lust, as it were with some blemish, they distort everything to a faulty and perverse end.

PSALM LV.

Although many interpreters refer this Psalm to the conspiracy of Absalom, through which David being driven from his kingdom fled fearfully into the wilderness, yet is it more likely that he complained to God of Saul's wrongful cruelty, at what time he was brought to utter distress by him. For it is a doleful prayer, and full of great fervour of affection, wherein he gathers all the circumstances that may be, to move God to mercy. Nevertheless, after he has made his prayers and uttered his grief, he lifts up his mind to the hope of deliverance; and as though he had already obtained what he prayed for, he sets forth God's gracious goodness.

[To the chief chanter upon Neginoth. An Instruction of David.]

2 Hearken unto my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my petition.

3 Give heed unto me, and answer me; I will wring my hands, and make a shriek in my speaking.

4 At the voice of mine enemy, before the persecution of the ungodly; because they tumble down iniquity upon me, they are against me in anger.

2 *Hearken unto my prayer, &c.*] By these words it appears that when David conceived these prayers he was distressed with exceeding great grief. For it was no mean inconvenience or any ordinary trouble that could so grievously have smitten the heart of a holy man endued with heroic courage. Then was it a sore anguish that forced him to wring his hands and to shriek out. For whereas some translate the word אָרִיד *I shall get the mastery*, it is altogether repugnant to the text; for David boasts not of his fortitude whereby he could refrain himself from speaking, but bewails his misery, and, to make himself pitied, says he is forced to troublous outcries. That which follows afterwards, namely, *at the voice of mine enemy*, although it unites well with the last verse, yet may be joined with the former words, *hearken*, and *hide not thyself*, unless peradventure you prefer to extend it to the whole context. By the word *voice* they think there is denoted a din, such as is wont to be in a great press of people; as if he had said, his enemies had come upon him furnished with a great host. But I rather understand *threatenings* thereby, because there is no doubt that like as Saul purposed the slaughter of the guiltless

prophet in his heart, so also he creaked of it oftentimes with his mouth. Also whereas they take *tumbling down of iniquity* for burdening or charging with false crimes a man who was guiltless and had deserved no such thing, it seems too refined, and at variance with the text. This latter member, *they are against me in anger*, is connected with this expression. Therefore *to tumble down iniquity* is nothing else, in my judgment, but to rush upon the miserable soul to destroy him, and to practise all that may be to despatch him. Unless peradventure any man like to make this distinction between these two members; that *to be against him in anger* should signify to proceed openly to destroy the man by main force, and that *to tumble down iniquity* should signify to fight against him with craft and policy. Thus will the word *IN* signify secret malice. *The persecution of the ungodly* is taken actively for the wrongful oppression which he offers to others. And he brands his enemy by the name of *ungodly* not so much to accuse him, as to testify his own integrity. For in persecutions it is a great comfort to have a clear conscience, and to be assailed not for one's own fault, but for nothing; because even then also we must hope for relief at the Lord's hand, who hath promised that he will be our advocate and defender in all miseries.

5 My heart trembleth within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.

6 Fear and trembling are come upon me, and a horrible dread hath covered me.

7 And I said, Who will give me wings like a dove? I will flee away and be at rest.

8 Behold I will fly a great way off, and lodge me in the wilderness. Selah.

9 I will haste my deliverance, *to escape* from the wind stirred up by the storm.

5 *My heart trembleth, &c.*] Hereby it now appears more clearly what sore torments David endured. Verily it is no effeminate or delicate person that speaks, but such a one as had already shewn many proofs of constancy. Notwithstanding, he not only complains here of the cruel wrongs of his enemies, but in saying that he was covered and overwhelmed with terrors, he confesses that he has not a heart of stone. And hereby is gathered the greatness of his encounters. Nevertheless we must learn, at the same time, that when God exerciseth his servants with more than common severity, there is no courage so stout which will not

quail. As long as we are well at ease, each man thinks himself an invincible soldier; but when it comes to fighting in earnest, and at close quarters, our weakness betrays itself openly. And by this occasion does Satan craftily move us and enforce us to despair; as though God, by withdrawing the help of his Spirit, shewed himself to have no care any longer of our welfare. This example therefore is worthy to be marked, that David being encompassed round about with a vast accumulation of miseries, had also at the same time inward battle against his own terrors, and not without wrestling and violent labour disengaged himself to call upon the name of God. And by terming them *deadly fears*, or *the terrors of death*, he shews that if he had not been upheld by the power of God, he must needs have sunk under them forthwith.

7 *Who will give me, &c.*] By these words he not only means that there is no way open for him to escape, but he also bewails his wretched case, that he can resort to nothing better than banishment, and yet not such banishment as is granted to men, but as if a dove should fly out afar off into some desert corner. Consequently he means that he cannot escape but by miracle, and moreover that there is no place for him to rest in among men, but that he is brought to that state that he is in far worse case than any bird is. Some think that the dove is named rather than other birds, because she excels in swiftness of flight, but I am not sure whether there is sufficient ground or not. Far more silly is that which the Jews babble, that it is written *wing* in the singular number, because doves fly but with one wing at once; whereas the alteration of number is everywhere to be found in the scriptures. The reason of the similitude is this rather, that David desires to escape the cruelty of his enemies no otherwise than a dove, which is fearful and unarmed, flies from the hawk. Whence we gather into how narrow a strait he was driven, that forgetting the kingdom which was promised him, in his fright he thinks of nothing but shameful flight, and is ready to forsake his country and to hide himself somewhere in the wilderness away from the company of men. And to the same purpose pertains what he adds, that he refuses not to remove afar off, that he may give place to the fury of his enemies, nor seeks truce, or drives off the time, as they are wont to do that have any hope or comfort yet remaining. These are the words of a man in despair, according to the sense of the flesh. Whence we gather what sore torments he felt, when being ready to abandon all things he could not even by so doing purchase his life. Therefore it is no marvel though

in such torments of anxiety his heart were pierced through with deadly sorrow. סועה is translated by some *tempestuous*, or *stormy*. And there can be no doubt that here is denoted a boisterous wind which is stirred up by a storm. But when it is said to be stirred up by the storm, it is a paraphrase of a violent and boisterous wind, which makes wayfarers to run apace till they find a house or some place to hide them in.

10 Destroy them, Lord: slit their tongue, for I have seen quarrelling and brawling in the city.

11 Day and night walk they about it upon the walls of it: labour and troubles are in the midst of it.

12 Wickedness is in the midst of it; and craftiness and deceit go not out of the streets of it.

10 *Destroy them, Lord, &c.*] Here, recovering his spirits, he again turns himself to calling upon God. Otherwise it had been but folly to scatter complaints into the air in vain, like heathenish persons who do not so much disburden as weary themselves with this empty kind of comfort. Indeed the saints mingle confused and inordinate groanings with their prayers, but yet at length they call themselves back to boldness of praying. And where he wishes that their tongues may be cut off, or slit, it seems that he alludes to the punishment that was laid upon the builders of Babel. The effect is, that God should by sudden dissensions cut off their wicked devices and disappoint their traitorous conspiracies. But indirectly he commemorates that notable proof, whereby God once avouched himself to be able to confound the strength and attempts of the wicked and ungodly, by disappointing their mutual communication and interview one with another. So doth he daily split asunder froward factions, when he setteth the enemies of the church at strife among themselves, so that they envy one another, labour under distrust of one another, surrender themselves to opposite feelings, and wilfully weaken themselves, while every man would be lord, and cannot brook to give place to others. Moreover, for more assurance of obtaining his suit, he recounts how great the wickedness and malice of his enemies is. For always that principle must be borne in mind, that the more presumptuously men run ahead into sinning, so much the nearer is God's vengeance at hand to encounter their fury. Therefore from the unbridled licentiousness of his enemies, David gathers that God's help approaches near unto him, because it is the property of God to resist

the proud, and to give grace to the lowly: James, iv. 6. First, he affirms that he cursed not his enemies without just cause: for he had found, by experience, that they were given to wrongs, vexations, and annoyance. In my judgment the interpreters trouble themselves to no purpose about the word *city*, whether it were Jerusalem or Keilah. For David seems to have put the word city in another sense; namely, that boldness to do harm and mischief reigned everywhere and openly. For there is a certain implied antithesis between a city and secret retreats. As if he had said that the custom of quarrelling had become audaciously prevalent, and by daily use was received no less than the common laws of a city. Now although it be likely that the metropolis of the realm should be denoted, or at least the city where Saul abode, yet is there no impediment but that one may extend it to the whole state of the realm in general. Nevertheless, I hold to that which I said just now; that the name of city is put indeterminedly, that David might shew how licentiousness of sinning reigned no less in public than thieves are wont to rob men in the coverts of woods. To the same purpose makes that which follows; namely, that these keep watch upon the walls. For whereas cities are enclosed with walls, to be guarded from robberies and sudden invasions, the prophet David bewails that the order of nature is reversed, so that, instead of fortifications, quarrellings and oppressions environ the city about, or guard the walls round about. Concerning the words און and עמל, we have spoken elsewhere. Also he points out the wellspring, when he says that wickedness dwells in the midst of it, and that craftiness and deceit reign in the streets of it. For it is not possible but that where desire of defrauding and wicked and froward practices have place, there such as see they may do it unpunished must also proceed to robbery and rapine, and to vexing simple and quiet persons. To be brief, he contrasts the foul and detestable disorder which prevailed everywhere under Saul with a well-ordered commonwealth; as if he should say that all the justice of it, all the order, and all pursuit of rectitude and honesty, was utterly banished. Now, whether this was spoken of one city only, or of more, surely it ought to be regarded as an important matter, that they who boasted themselves to be the holy people of God were fallen into such gross corruptions that their cities were become, as it were, the dens of robbers. By the way, it is to be considered that the cities which are so corrupted and stained with depraved manners are doomed to everlasting destruction, not only by the imprecation of David, but also by the judgment of the Holy Ghost.

13 Surely it is no enemy that hath wrought me this reproach, for then I could have borne it: neither was it an adversary that hath magnified himself over me, for then might I have hid myself from him.

14 But even thou, a man of mine own order; my guide, and my familiar.

15 Which sweetly took counsel together in secret, and went as companions into the house of God.

16 Let death seize upon them; let them go down quick into the grave: for wickedness is in their dwelling-place, even in the midst.

13 *Surely it is no, &c.*] He enhances the atrocity of the injury, because that not only his professed enemies troubled him, but also his specious and falsehearted friends. For the grief is the greater, when those go about our destruction who ought to help us. But because the word נָשַׁן is ill translated, as though David should say, he could have taken it patiently if an open enemy had wrought him that displeasure, readers must be warned that he rather complains that he could not be aware of secret snares. For I consider the repetition of *I had borne it*, and *I had hid myself*. Therefore, in this place, *to bear* signifies not to suffer, or abide, but rather to put back a stroke by striking it upwards, according as we say, I had warded his blow. For when we are intent on guarding against our enemies, then do treacherous men enter the more easily to do us harm under pretence of friendship. Therefore he says it was not an open enemy, whose blow he could have received or warded; nor an adversary, whose hurting he might have shunned. Some take the word *magnify* to signify vaunting in words, but in my judgment it is too constrained. For it imports as much as to put forth a man's self violently, or to rise up against a man to hurt him. In fine, David complains that he was oppressed by clandestine arts, against which he could make no defence. But it is uncertain whom he notes here. I cannot be brought to subscribe to the opinion of those who will have it to be Ahithophel, for the whole context is not applicable to the persecution of Absalom. Others think that some traitor of the city Keilah is noted; but I leave that for any one to adopt that likes it. Howbeit, it is no less likely that some one of the noblemen of the court is enumerated, who was commonly known to be solemnly bound to David, and familiar with him. Unless perchance some had rather extend it to many, as it is easy

to conjecture that it was not some one man that was this covenant-breaker, but that according as each man grew in estimation, so he became a foe to the holy prophet, for fear of losing the king's favour. There is no impediment therefore, but that he may here speak to the chief of the king's band together with their head. Now when we see that David was not only assaulted with open force, but also maliciously betrayed by his friends, in his person is portrayed to us the case of all the godly, that every one of us should be ready to undergo this twofold encounter. For Satan not only rages against the church of God with slaughters, but also privily sends in household enemies to assail it with treason and wiliness. Which kind of enemies, as says Bernard, a man can neither shun nor put to flight. But whosoever it was, David terms him first *a man of his own order*; for so I interpret the word **לְעַמִּי**, because a noun of estimation suits not, whether it be taken passively for equality, or actively for David's own judgment, as some translate it, *thou wert mine equal*, or *my fellow*; and others translate it, *I made account of thee as of another self*. But this agrees very well, that David should complain that the band of mutual society was broken, by which God coupleth men together among themselves. For as the same station makes soldiers fellows in the camp; so likewise is it meet that alliance and joint intercourse, and the interchange of civilities, should also produce friendship among all men in all departments of life. Therefore, when any two are called together to one office, God joineth them together as it were under his auspices, that they should help one another like brothers. David then aggravates the crime of the traitor by this circumstance; as he does also when he calls him his guide or captain: thirdly, when he casts in his teeth that they have taken secret counsel together with the greatest delight; and lastly, that they have frequented holy assemblies together. For **וּבְמִסְכָּתוֹ** signifies in this place, *society*, or *fellowship*, (as if he should say, he had been a close companion to this false friend of his,) rather than it should be referred to the noise of a multitude. But in this last member he complains that he had been betrayed by such a man as he had conversed with as his fellow; yea, and as his master, not only in worldly affairs, but also in the worship of God, notwithstanding that religion is the most holy bond of union among men. By the way, let us learn that the Holy Ghost condemneth all such as break the sacred bonds of nature, whereby they were knit together among themselves. There is a certain fellowship between all mankind: but the nearer any man is allied to us, in the holier bond is

he linked to us. For the principle which was unknown to heathen men, must be borne in mind by us; namely, that it comes to pass, not by chance, by casualty, or by fortune, but by the providence of God, that neighbourhood, kindred, and community of calling make fellowship among men. But the league of godliness is the holiest of all.

16 *Let death seize, &c.*] Now he inveighs against the whole faction; and yet he involves not the whole realm without exception in this curse, but the captains, or standard-bearers, who persecuted him wickedly without any cause. We have said heretofore that David wished not thus to his enemies from a blind or froward affection; for he pleaded not in his own private cause, but God's, and he was governed by the Holy Ghost. This wish, therefore, proceeded not from an inordinate and indiscreet zeal, or moodiness, lest any man might think that by the example of David it were lawful for him to break out into cursing and banning as soon as he is injured. For if we are led by desire of revenge, we shall imitate the holy prophet amiss, who, with an uncorrupted and well-regulated zeal, calls here upon God for vengeance against the reprobates, who were already appointed to eternal damnation. Some translate *שׁ*, *may condemn*, but it is constrained; and so is that also which pleases others, namely, *Let him appoint death to be their taskmaster*. I have chosen that which was most simple. And I willingly admit that which some add as an annotation, that where he wishes that his enemies may go down quick into the grave, he alludes to the punishment of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and the rest of that faction; Num. xvi. 31. Notwithstanding, it seems to me that he therefore speaks of a sudden and unlooked-for kind of death, because they thought themselves safe from death by reason of their wealth; as if David should say, Lord, as they are so blinded with their own puissance that they no longer think themselves in the state of mortal men, make the earth to swallow them up quick; that is, let nothing hinder but that they and their pride together may be dragged to the punishment they deserve. The rendering of the cause shews again that David inveighs not so much against the persons of his enemies, as denounces punishment to all such as afflict the church with wrongful persecutions. *Wickedness*, says he, *is in their tents*; as if he should say, Wheresoever they choose their abode, there dwell many wickednesses. Which he expresses better afterwards, saying that it dwells in the midst of them; which implies as much as that they foster it within them, and therefore that they are inseparable companions, or abide together in one lodging.

17 I will cry unto God, and the Lord shall save me.

18 At eventide, in the morning, and at noontide, will I pray, and make a noise; and he shall hear my voice.

19 He hath redeemed my soul into peace, from the battle that was towards me; for in many were they with me.

20 God shall hear, and punish them, even he that sitteth from everlasting. Selah. For there are no alterations in them; and they fear not God.

17 *I will cry unto God, &c.*] I retain the future tense in the verbs, because he does not so much report what he had done, as encourage and incite himself as well to earnestness in praying as to hope and confidence. Therefore although there were no escape for him, so that he differed in a manner nothing from a dead man, yet he protests that he will not cease from praying, and he warrants himself good success. In the next verse he enjoins himself to perseverance more expressly. For it was not enough for him to have said in one word *I will pray*, because many do the same perfunctorily, who in a little time are wearied. First of all continuance, and secondly earnestness are denoted. And when he names *morning, evening, and noontide*, we may gather that they were the ordinary times of the godly to pray in those times. For as sacrifices were daily offered in the temple every morning and evening, each man was put in mind to pray privately at home at his house also. The midtime was appointed for other sacrifices. Again, as we are more slow to pray than we ought to be, except each of us stir up and force himself, this chief exercise of godliness will grow cold with us, yea and by little we shall quite forget to pray at all, if we hold not ourselves under some restraint. God therefore in appointing certain hours beforehand, meant to remedy our infirmity; and the same reason may be applied to private prayer, according as appears by this place, answerable to which also is the example of David, ix. 3. And although sacrifices are abolished in these days, yet we are not free from the slothfulness which needed such helps to awaken it in old time: the fathers and we require the same treatment, so that every one of us ought to prescribe certain hours to himself, which he will not suffer to slip away without prayers. By the words *make a noise*, there is denoted, as I have before said, earnestness, which David put as a sign of

exceeding great grief and a very sorrowful mind. For he made no noise or crying out that was not wrested from him by sorrow and anguish of mind. He avouches therefore that no torments or grief shall prevent his directing his plaints to God, and fostering a fixed and assured hope of deliverance in his heart, because he is persuaded for a certainty that God will hear his prayers effectually.

19 *He hath delivered my, &c.*] They that read the two latter verses in the preter tense, seem to lean upon some reason, as if David should prove here that he was heard because he had been delivered. But this supposition is easily refuted, either from the consideration that being persuaded of his deliverance, he boasts that he is safe, or else because he intermingles divers thoughts, as we know that now and then the success that ensued is joined with the suit that was made for it. Therefore after he has declared his prayers, he adds also the profit that ensued from them, that he may give God thanks for his deliverance. And he says that *he was redeemed into peace, or unto peace*, because, being brought to the last cast, he obtained it not but by singular miracle. That which follows, *they were with me in many*, admits a twofold sense. Some expound it of his enemies, and, according to them, *with me* is as much as to say *against me*, and so it would be a confirmation of the redeeming that he spoke of just now, that being besieged with a huge multitude of enemies, he escaped not safe but by the wonderful grace of God. Others had rather understand it of angels, whom we know to fight in battle array for us, according as they pitch their tents round about those that fear God. And they think the letter **נ** to be superfluous here, as in many other places, as if he had said simply *many were with me*. And this latter sense contains a doctrine full of comfort, that although God have no need of others' help, yet for our infirmities' sake he uses many helpers to our welfare. But perhaps it will be more suitable to refer it to his enemies; that David, in reporting the multitude of them, should thereby the more extol the power that delivered him.

20 *God shall hear, &c.*] Because the word ענה signifies sometimes to witness or avouch, some take it thus; God shall rise up as a witness against them. But I cannot tell whether the construction will bear it or no. For when the Hebrews treat of witnessing or avouching, they add the letter **נ**. I doubt not but David puts this word for *to afflict* or *to punish*, but in an ambiguous sense, as it were in playful irony. For ענה signifies *to answer*. Erewhile he had said, *God shall hear*, which doubtless he refers to his own person. Now

therefore he adds that he was heard with effect, so that God rose up as an avenger to plague his enemies. At the same time he adorns God with an attribute from which godly minds feel no small comfort in cases of trouble and confusion. For whence comes that excessive heat of impatience which drives us headlong, but because we lift not up our minds to God's everlastingness? And yet there is nothing more unreasonable than for mortal men, who flee away every moment like a shadow, to measure God by their capacity. For in so doing, they pull him down from his everlasting throne, and make him subject to the various fluctuations of the world. *For there are no alterations in them.* Because the word חלל signifies as well *to cut up*, as *to alter*, or *change*, some think that David complains that God too long delays the destruction of such as were worthy to be punished out of hand. But I see not how this should agree. Therefore others do better to translate it *changes*, and yet the interpreters vary in this also. For some understand it thus; that there is no change for the better to be hoped for, because their wilfulness is past recovery, and they are so given over to their own naughtiness, that it is not possible to turn them to repentance; and a certain natural cruelty so possesses their minds, that they cannot at any time incline to mercy or gentleness. More correctly do others expound it as spoken in the manner of a complaint, that their prosperity flows continually with full stream, as if they were not subject to troubles like other folk. And he says, they are so corrupted through God's indulgence, that they shake off all fear, as if they were exempted from the lot of all men. Thus the Hebrew copulative will import an inference, thus; They feel no alterations, and therefore they fear not God. And truly, the longer that they lie benumbed in their delights, the more they also harden in their wickedness; and where pride reigns, there, as long as the Lord spareth us, we call not to mind that we are men. But he indirectly rebukes the madness of those that imagine themselves to be as it were demigods, because they lie not under adversity as the residue do. For what a small thing is the race of man's life, if it be compared to the eternal sitting of God? We must therefore take diligent heed that in prosperity there creep not upon us such carelessness as may spurn even against God.

21 He hath laid his hand upon his own peace, and broken his own league.

22 The words of his mouth are softer than butter,

and his heart is war: his sayings are smoother than oil, and yet are they darts.

23 Cast thy giving upon the Lord, and he will feed thee: he will not suffer the righteous to stagger for ever.

24 But thou, O God, shalt cast them into the pit of corruption. The bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days: but I will put my trust in thee.

21 *He hath laid his hand, &c.*] Because he will soon after speak in the plural number, it is likely that before he comes to the people he glances at the author and head of the wicked conspiracy: and he charges him with making war in the midst of peace, and so with breach of promise. In which words he accuses him of unfaithfulness, because having no wrong offered him, nor making lawful proclamation, he set upon him unawares with force of arms. For far more wicked is he that rises up against his own confederates without cause, than he that openly and earnestly revenges the wrongs that are done to him. Which subject he pursues afterwards more at large, saying that butter and oil are in his lips, when notwithstanding war is in his heart, and even his very words are darts. For although they savoured of nothing but sweetness at the first taste, yet they wounded him with their secret venom no less than with darts or swords, according as it is said in the proverb, the false-hearted bear in their mouth poison smeared with honey. And the cruelty that flows out of the heart shewed itself there also. Moreover, we know that Saul often promised all that might be in fair words, or rather that he flattered David to allure him into his meshes, and no doubt but his courtiers adopted the same subtlety. And surely it is a peculiar encounter for God's children, that subtle persons go about to beguile them with their allurements, and to snare them in mischief. But meanwhile the Holy Ghost, condemning all indirect arts, and chiefly deceitful flatteries, exhorteth them to follow singleness.

23 *Cast thy giving, &c.*] Because the verb יָהַב signifies *to give*, the principles of grammar require that יָהַב should in this place be translated *thy giving*, or *thy gift*. Now, although the greater part of interpreters allow a different sense, yet they adduce no reason why it should be translated *thy burden*. For the verb יָהַב is not taken anywhere for *to burden*, and that the noun, which is

derived thereof, should signify a *burden*, appears not by any example. Whence it appears that because they thought it a hard and unreasonable manner of speech to say, *Cast thy gift upon the Lord*, they were compelled of necessity to devise the other sense. Truly it is a godly sentiment, that all the cares and troubles wherewith we be grieved should be unburdened into God's bosom, because there is no other remedy to ease the afflicted mind than to lean upon the providence of God. Still, as there is not any example of this to be met with in the whole scriptures, I willingly embrace the other sense, which contains a profitable and very pregnant doctrine in it; that is to say, if we take *our gift* passively, for all benefits which we desire God to bestow upon us. Therefore the exhortation tends to this end, that we should commit to God the care of all things that are needful for us. For it is not enough to desire God to succour our needs, unless our petitions and requests rest themselves upon his providence. For we see many pray with violent emotion, as though they would fain compel God to be at their command, while they weary or distress themselves immoderately. Wherefore not without cause does David commend this meekness in praying, that the faithful should leave to God alone the care of the things that they require. For the vice of overhastiness cannot otherwise be corrected than by submitting to God's discretion what is meet to be granted us. As for those that expound it, Acknowledge thou that God hath heretofore bestowed so many good things upon thee, that thou oughtest to trust to his bounteousness still; they depart too far from the natural sense. But whether David exhort others, or speak to himself, it makes no great matter; although I allow that he should by his own example prescribe a common doctrine to all the godly. What he adds next, *he will feed thee*, very well confirms the said doctrine which I have set down: for as our life has need of many helps, we are almost ever unquiet and wavering. But David promises that God will be instead of a shepherd to us, that will have regard of our necessities, and will minister to us whatsoever our need shall require. He adds afterwards that he will not suffer the righteous to fall for ever, or to stagger continually. For if you take מוט for *falling*, the meaning will be, that God will establish the righteous person, so that he shall not fall for evermore. Which sense, although I disallow not, yet I incline rather to the other. For we see the righteous stagger for a time, and wellnigh slip, while they are tossed from post to pillar, as it were with sundry storms. And because nothing is more miserable than to be thus buffeted by ceaseless storms,

David promises that there shall one day be an end, because God will not suffer them to be always subject to sorrows, or to be harassed with continual dangers and cares, but will give them a calm and quiet state.

24 *But thou, O God, &c.*] Again he returns to his enemies, that he may shew the difference between his end and theirs. For as they triumph awhile as conquerors, and the godly lie prostrate under their feet, there remains but this one comfort, to trust that there is a rest prepared for those who now are scarce able to hold up their heads for fear among so many dangers, and also to foresee by faith the judgment that hangs over their enemies. As for the words, because the word *pit* is used, and thereto is added שחת, which signifies *a grave*, and that it were improper to say they should be drawn into the pit of the grave; therefore many interpreters follow rather the etymology of the Hebrew word, for it is derived from חת, which signifies *to corrupt* or *destroy*, and translate it *the pit of corruption*. As it matters little to the effect which you choose, I leave it indifferent. For David means that not only a temporal plague hangs over his enemies, but also eternal destruction. And so he distinguishes them from the faithful, who themselves also are oftentimes plunged into deep pits of miseries, out of which they rise again afterwards; but David says that the fall of his enemies shall be deadly, because God shall cast them down into the grave, where they shall rot. *Bloody men.* By a general reason he confirms that which he has said. For seeing that the vengeance of God shall certainly light upon all that are cruel and guileful, he gathers that his enemies, whose cruelty and guilefulness he had felt by experience, cannot escape the same. But experience cries out against this. For nothing is more bloody than tyrants, who devote the whole of mankind to the slaughter at their own pleasure. But a tyrant that has murdered three hundred thousand men shall live till he be aged; and those are they whom David notes, and not the common assassins. I answer, that although God do not always take punishment so speedily, yet is the thing that is spoken here made plain by many proofs. It is enough that temporal punishments are for the most part seen: neither is an uniform measure to be rigorously exacted in them, according as I have shewn more at large in the thirty-seventh Psalm. Again, howsoever it be that wicked men live to be very old, yet do they lead but a fearful and unquiet life, so that they walk in the shadow of death, and, to speak properly, are far from living their time. Now, seeing that the life which is so cursed of the Lord is worse than any death, it deserves not to be made account

of; especially considering that their own evil conscience tortures them like a most cruel executioner. And truly, if we consider well what it is to run through the true course of life, none other come to the mark than such as live and die unto God, because to them only as well death as life is gain. And this is a very timely comfort as often as the wicked assault us either with sword or subtlety, that they shall not live long, because God shall snatch them away as it were with a sudden whirlwind, and chase away their attempts as if they were but mists, whereby they seem about to destroy the whole world. Also the close of the Psalm admonishes us that this judgment is not seen but by faith and patience: for David rests the security of his salvation on hope. Whence we gather that the ungodly are not taken out of the world so speedily, but that they first exercise us with continued wrongs, even till we are sick at heart.

PSALM LVI.

This Psalm partly mingles complaints with prayers, and partly assuages sorrow with musing upon God's grace. For David, calling upon God's help against the cruelty of Saul and his enemies, glories of his success. Notwithstanding, it may be that he added this thanksgiving a good while after, when he was despatched of the danger.

[To the chief chanter, upon the dumb dove in far places, David's Michtam when the Philistines had caught him in Gath.]

The story whereof this title makes mention, is written in 1 Sam. xxi. For at such time as he could not rest in any of his coverts, he was forced at length to flee to king Achish. Howbeit, he says here that he was caught in his journey; and one may gather the same thing from the sacred history, where Achish says; *Behold, ye have seen the mad fellow, to what purpose have ye brought him in to me*, and it is likely that he was suspected, as if he had been a traitor, or had come to practise somewhat. Now although he counterfeited himself a fool to escape the danger of death, yet he declares here sufficiently that he called upon God steadfastly with a settled mind, so that his faith, which was hid under that infirmity, put forth its force before God. Then was it no such unruliness of mind as could carry him headlong to unlawful means; but in case of extremity, fear drove him to devise a stratagem to save his life, rather than his dignity. And by how much his princely courage was less

apparent before men, so much the more stoutly did his faith wrestle against his hidden terrors within, as it appears by the Psalm. Now what he says *upon the dumb dove*, some think it to be the beginning of some common sonnet. Others suppose that David is metaphorically called a *dove*, and surely this appellation agrees very well with the matter. To the same purpose also, makes the words *in far places*, because David being driven into the land of his enemies by the fury of his foes, might worthily complain that he was cast out afar off as it were into desert places. For the translation of others a *palace*, is constrained. Of the word *Michtam*, we have spoken heretofore. And although I avouch nothing, as the Hebrew interpreters themselves disagree, yet it seems likely, as I said at that time, that it was either a kind of tune or a musical instrument.

2 Have mercy upon me, O God ; for man devoureth me ; daily assaulting me, he holdeth me straight.

3 Mine enemies devour me daily ; surely many are bent to distress me, O Most High.

4 In the day that I was afraid I did put my trust in thee.

5 In God will I praise his word ; in God have I trusted ; I will not be afraid what flesh can do to me.

2 *Have mercy upon me, &c.*] It is uncertain whether he spoke of foreign, or of household enemies. Truly, when he was brought to king Achish, he was as it were one sheep alone between two flocks of wolves ; as he was deadly hated of the Philistines, and no less cruelly persecuted by his own countrymen. Moreover, in saying *man* in the singular number, he complains indefinitely that he finds no kindness at all among men ; as if he should say, Lord, now doth my utter extremity crave thy faithfulness and thine aid, because all the world gapes upon me to devour me ; for soon after he repeats the same sentence in the plural number. The word *daily* agrees best with Saul and his faction. Nevertheless, David bewails his misery, that he is oppressed with a great and powerful multitude of enemies, and assaulted with passing cruelty. As for the words, some translate *רָשָׁע* to *regard*, but I have no doubt that that insatiable rage wherewith his enemies burned to swallow him up, is expressed by an elegant metaphor. Also the word *לָחַם*, which, following others, I have translated by the word *assault*, signifies *to eat up*, and so it would be a continuation of the metaphor. But as in most places it is

taken in the former sense, I would not change that which was most received. Thus much only will I briefly glance at, that they corrupt the sense sadly, who, in the second place translate, *many are fighting with me*; as if he should say that the angels came to his succour, for they break off the complaint which holds on through the whole verse.

4 *In the day that, &c.*] The verbs are of the future tense, but they must be resolved into the preterite. And it is an acknowledgment of infirmity with fear, but with exception, so that he yielded not to fear. For although his dangers vexed him at the heart, yet denies he that he had shaken off hope. He does not therefore vaunt his heroic elevation of mind, by which he looked with calm contempt upon all chances; but acknowledging his own fear, he says he persevered nevertheless in the hope of God's grace. And surely it is a true trial of our faith, when fear disquiets us after the feeling of the flesh, and yet does not disturb our minds from their propriety. Indeed, fear and hope seem to be affections more contrary than that they can dwell together in one heart, but experience shews that hope reigns nowhere well, save where fear possesses some part of the heart. For hope is not exercised in the calm estate of the mind, but rather lies as it were sound asleep, but then it exerts its force when it raises up the mind that was cast down with cares, when it quiets the heart that was troubled with grief, and when it sustains and upholds the mind that was stricken through with fear. And therefore this was an earnest trial of faith in David, that for all his fear he ceased not to trust in the Lord; that being thoughtful on account of the greatness of his peril, he nevertheless plucked up a good heart; and that he trusted that God would be his deliverer.

5 *In God will I praise, &c.*] In this verse he shews that his courage increased by hoping, which is wont to happen to all God's servants. For though they have much ado to stand in hope at the first, or rather, being sore oppressed with terrors, rise not up to hope without hard encounter; yet by striving, they gather strength to disengage themselves until their confidence increasing, they, like stout champions, go forth to repel their assailants. Moreover, *to praise*, in this place, signifies as much as *to glory* or *boast*; as if he should say that, furnished with all conquering faith, he now exults in the full assurance of hope. The cause of this gladness he grounds upon the word of God, giving us tacitly to understand that howsoever he may seem to be forsaken, and as it were utterly abandoned by God, yet his promise suffices him, because he is thoroughly persuaded

that he is true to his promises. I will not cease, says he, to glory in God, because I will rest upon his word; and although he help me not openly, but rather withdraw his hand from aiding me, yet will I be contented with his only word. This is a sentence worthy to be had in remembrance. We see what is our fastidiousness and peevishness when God answereth not our desires out of hand. For although we dare not quarrel with him, yet does our flesh chafe within because there appears nothing but bare promises. Much has he profited therefore, who in the time of temptation, upon the only assurance of God's word, proceeds manfully in the praise of him. That which follows seems at the first blush to carry no great weight with it. For who is so insane as to think that the ability of men is greater to do harm, than God's immeasurable power is to help? But of this wicked and fainthearted distrust whereby we degrade God's power beneath his creatures, every one of us can bear too good witness to himself. And therefore David has expressed here no common proceeding of faith, when he says he is armed with invincible courage to despise the menaces of his enemies. And all the godly must exercise themselves chiefly in this kind of combat, that looking upon God's help as a secure protection under all annoyances, they may despise every terror. As soon as our enemies assail us, let it come to our mind that their assaults are directed against God himself, as if they strove to overmatch him. Now what greater shame can there be than to leave these brainsick attempts in equilibrium, as they term it, with God's invincible power? For as by impeaching our faith, they attempt to overthrow God's word and the help that he hath promised, even so, except we believe that God, standing on our side, is able even with his little finger, yea, or with his breath alone, to disappoint all their practices and to scatter their hosts, we indirectly diminish his power; or rather, we make him no better than a mortal man, who being able to match one, is vanquished by two. But it is demanded how David had so suddenly put off all infirmity, that whereas awhile ago he was horribly afraid of death, now he vaunts himself boldly against his enemies? I answer, that by this boldness is not betokened the total absence of fear, as though being quite out of reach of the enemy's weapons he complacently smiles at all dangers; but because he yielded not so much to fear, that it got the upperhand of him, but setting the shield of hope before him, drove back all fear, and fenced himself with assurance of delivery, he did well to boast with holy vaunting. *In God is my trust, therefore will I not be afraid.* And in the

way of contempt he terms men *flesh*, to put himself in mind of their foolish presumptuousness, in that, forgetting themselves, they hesitate not to attempt so many things.

6 Daily do mine own words trouble me; all their thoughts of me are to mischief me.

7 They flock together, they keep themselves close, they watch my heels, because they long for my soul.

8 After their mischief they escape; thou, O God, shalt cast down peoples in thine anger.

9 Thou keepest a reckoning of my fleeting; put my tears into thy bottle; are they not in thy register?

6 *Daily do mine own, &c.*] The interpreters rend the first part of the verse in various ways. Some read *my words* in the nominative case, and rightly, in my judgment. Others refer this to David's enemies, and translate it thus: *They misconstrue my words*; or, *they grieve me with mine own words*. Some take the verb *יעצב* neutrally, and translate it thus: *My words are troublesome*. But as *עצב* most commonly signifies *to make sad* or *heavy*, and is ever taken transitively in Piel, there is no need to depart from the propriety of the language. Also it will flow better, to say thus: *Mine own words put me to heaviness*; than if it should be transferred to the enemies. It is therefore a twofold complaint; namely, that David on the one side finds no comfort, but sees all things go against him, and his devices overthrown by a calamitous issue; and that on the contrary, his enemies conspire his destruction, and practise sundry machinations against him. This, at the first sight, seems far from reasonable, that whereas erewhile he had warranted himself to be set free and clear from fear, he should now say he works his own sorrow. But I have warned you already, that although he looked down upon his enemies from the watch-tower of faith, yet was he not free from carefulness and fear. He speaks here of his temptations, which he did not annihilate, but vanquish by the steadfastness of faith. He says therefore, that he is destitute of reason and counsel, because whatsoever he devises or purposes turns out untowardly. And he enhances the grievousness of his distress, in that his enemies cease not to lay their heads together, and to invent various stratagems for his destruction. The same idea he follows up when he says, *They flock together*. For to have had to do with one or two, had

been to be borne under any circumstances. But for one man to be assaulted by a multitude or a host of men, that was too hard. By their *keeping of themselves close*, he glances at their wiles or clandestine arts, whereby they endeavoured to oppress him unawares. For the word יַצְפִּינוּ ought, by the principles of grammar, to have the letter ך in the midst of it. Therefore they think the ך to be as it were a mark of Hiphil, to express that David's enemies seek hiding-places in their wiles, that they may compass him secretly. He adds, that whithersoever he turn himself, they press eagerly upon him, and in a manner tread upon his heels, so that he can have no respite. He says that the cause of it is their implacable hatred, which cannot be satisfied otherwise than by the death of him.

8 *After their mischief, &c.*] Some read the beginning of the verse interrogatively, thus; *Shall they escape quite with their wickedness?* But as no necessity compels us to adopt so far-fetched an interpretation, it is better to take the words as they read, thus: Although they escape clear in their wickedness, yet shalt thou cast down such people, O God. And this he says because when the ungodly have gone on in their impious deeds without self-restraint or hindrance, as though they had acquired a license, they run riot; according as we see at this day that heathenish persons are puffed up with cyclopian daring, because they seem to themselves to be without God's reach. And they not only promise themselves impunity, but also put all their hope and assurance in evil-doing. And what makes them rush onward the more boldly and desperately, they think they have a remedy against all mishaps. After David has reported this according to their meaning, immediately he turns the edge of this perverse confidence by appealing to God's judgment. Although they be so proud, says he, yet shalt thou, O God, cast down peoples when the ripe time of vengeance is come. And he uses the plural number to confirm his own mind, because it was a hard matter for him not to be abashed at so huge a multitude of enemies. As often then as the bands of our enemies shall make assault upon us, let us call to mind that it is the peculiar office of God to cast down, not one man only, or a few, nor one people only, but even the whole world.

9 *Thou keepest a reckoning, &c.*] It is an abrupt prayer. For having begun to desire God to have regard to his tears, immediately, as if he had obtained his suit, he avouches that they are written in God's book: unless perhaps some had rather take this interrogation also in the manner of praying. Nevertheless this sense seems the simpler; Lord, I need not

to make many words to thee, for I know that thou hast anticipated me, of thine own accord, to perform that which I was about to desire. But it is better to weigh every word by itself. He says that God *keepeth tale of his fleeting, or flight*, that he may make himself an object of pity. For he had not ceased now, of a long time, to wander from place to place like a vagabond and an outlaw. And he speaks not of one flight only, but it is a changing of the number. Howbeit it seems that by the singular number he denotes emphatically that all his life was marked by wanderings, as if he should call it a continual pilgrimage. That continual wandering, therefore, was calculated to purchase David favour for pity's sake, because he had dragged on his life with sorrow and grief in long and intricate circuities. And therefore he requests to have his tears put up in God's bottle. They were wont to keep wine and oil in bottles. The meaning then is, that God should not suffer David's tears to fall to the ground, but reserve them in safekeeping, as precious. Moreover we see here that David grounds his prayers upon God's providence; that he looketh continually to the steps of his servants, according also as Christ teacheth that all the hairs of our head are numbered before God: Matt. x. 30. For except we be persuaded that whatsoever trouble we endure comes into account before God, our minds will never attain to this boldness to pray that God will vouchsafe to put up our tears into his bottle, that by the beholding of them he may at length be moved to succour us. Soon after he declares that he has obtained his wish. For, as I said just now, I had rather read this place affirmatively, so that David should arm himself with this comfort to hope for deliverance, because all his tears were enrolled in God's register, that is to say, because the remembrance of them is not wiped out. Now, if God yield so much honour to the tears of the godly, surely much less will he suffer their blood to be spilt, but that he will keep a reckoning of every drop of it. Tyrants burn up the very bones and the flesh, but yet the blood will remain alive for ever, to cry out for vengeance. For no time can erase the thing that God hath engrossed in his remembrance.

10 Then shall mine enemies be turned back, when I cry out: I know this, that God is with me.

11 In God will I praise *his* word. In the Lord will I praise *his* word.

12 In God have I trusted: I will not fear what man can do unto me.

10 *Then shall mine, &c.*] He boasts more cheerfully of his victory. For as if it were in a matter before him, he points out the very instant that his enemies shall be turned back. Now, although he saw not their ruin as yet so near at hand, yet upon trust of God's promise he was able to note the ripe time which was as yet to be patiently waited for. To be brief: although God made not so great speed, nor dispersed David's enemies at the same instant that he prayed, yet the holy man believed that his prayers should not be in vain, and declares excellently how, or from whence, he was assured that his enemies should be put to flight; namely, because God never disappointeth the prayers and petitions of his servants. And as he is well assured of this in his heart, he patiently suspends the longing of his soul, that he may calmly wait for the effect. This place contains a profitable doctrine. For David, to obtain his petition, says not that he prays unadvisedly or doubtfully, but that he brings an assured belief that God will mercifully grant his requests. Moreover, upon conceiving this faith, he hesitates not to despise whatsoever Satan and all the rout of the ungodly shall attempt.

11 *In God will I praise, &c.*] Here the relative is not expressed, as it is a little before; but one may gather, by the said former place, that it is to be supplied. And the repetition conveys no little force, as if it had been said, Although God delay the open shewing of his grace, so that he may seem to perform nothing, but to delude David with vain words, yet shall not the holy man's heart shrink, but that he will always glory in the word of God. And surely this is *to set to the seal that God is true*, John iii. 33, when we cease not to yield substantial glory to his word, even at such time as the experience of his goodness and might is taken away. The repetition, as I said, tends to this end: Although God seem to-day to be departed from me, because he hath withdrawn his help, yet will I rest upon his word. If the same thing betide me to-morrow and the day after, I will persist in yielding the same praise still. Let the faithful accustom themselves to thinking so, that in time of temptation they may hold them fast to true glorying, contenting themselves with the bare word. For although God minister unto them manifold occasions of glorying from time to time in his benefits, yet shall they scarcely be able to proceed three steps at any time unless they have learned to lean upon the word alone. To the same purpose pertains also the repeating of the other sentence, *In God have I trusted, &c.* For though all men confess themselves to be safe enough under the protection of God alone, yet does experience

shew that we are drawn away from it by every discomposure, however trifling. Therefore let us continually meditate on this doctrine as David did; that whatsoever men menace, how much soever they excel in wit or strength, how well soever they are furnished and appointed, if we compare them with God, there is no reason why we should be afraid, because whatsoever is otherwise terrible in them shall come to nought.

13 Upon me are thy vows, O God ; I will pay praises unto thee.

14 For thou hast delivered my soul from death : and hast thou not also delivered my feet from falling headlong ? that I may walk before thee in the light of the living ?

13 *Upon me are, &c.*] I said at the beginning, that as David had already escaped the danger when he compiled this Psalm, it was likely that his good success had taught him to attach to it this thanksgiving. Meanwhile, it must be observed, that even in the midst of affliction he was always animated with such courage, that he was ready and prepared to give thanks. And he says that *the vows of God were upon him*, because he was bound to perform them; like as the Latins say, they are condemned of their vow when they have obtained the thing that they sued for when they undertook the vow. For there is as it were an obligation made, when we have promised to become thankful to God, and God hath granted our requests. And understand the vows of God as if I should say that the borrowed money which is in my hand is the money of my creditor, because I am in his debt. David then being delivered, confesses that this deliverance proceeded from God; and therefore says that he is charged with the vows that he had made, because the condition is performed. Now of what vows he speaks appears by the second part of the verse: which is to be marked for this cause, lest any man might unadvisedly imagine, as the papists do, that all manner of vows are allowed; for he says he will render praises, or the sacrifices of praises. For although the word signify but praises, yet is it applied to sacrifices, so far forth as they were symbols of praises. Truly David knew that God neither required nor regarded sacrifices simply and of themselves: but as being subject to the law, he ought not to neglect the holy ceremonies that were enjoined the whole people, it is probable that he speaks of the customary testimony which

the faithful were wont to yield when they had received any notable benefit at God's hand.

14 *For thou hast delivered, &c.*] He confirms that which I said just now; namely, that he imputes the safety of his life to God, because he had perished if God had not wonderfully preserved him. For, to banish all doubt, he says he was preserved not only from the craft, the malice, the violence, and the swords of his enemies, but also even from death itself. The same expresses he in another form of speech; That he was held back by God's hand at such time as he was falling headlong; for some translate the word מִדָּחִי amiss, for *from sliding*, whereas David means rather a violent rushing forward. To be brief; by the greatness of the danger, he gathers that he was preserved by the hand of God. So likewise when God hath rid us out of any danger, we must deal in such sort as that we may bear in mind how great and how dreadful it was. For while during the afflictions themselves we are over fearful; but afterwards both the fear and the remembrance of God's grace vanish away together. *To walk in the light of the living*, is nothing else but to enjoy the light of the sun alive: but the words *before God*, which are interposed, denote the difference between the faithful, whose purpose is to employ their life in the service of God, and the worldlings, who, like runaways, roam at large; not that they flee from his sight, but because they turn their backs upon him.

PSALM LVII.

In this Psalm there are two parts. In the first, David declares his own griefs, and, as his necessity required, he calls to God for help against Saul and the rest of his enemies. And in the second part, having conceived hope of deliverance, he addresses himself to pay his sacrifice unto God.

[*To the chief chanter, "Destroy not," David's Michtam, when he fled from the face of Saul in the cave.*]

2 Have mercy upon me, O God; have mercy upon me: for my soul trusteth in thee; and in the shadow of thy wings will I trust, till iniquity be overpast.

3 I will cry to the high God; to the God that performeth towards me.

4 He will send from heaven, and preserve me from

the reproach of him that swalloweth me up: God will send his mercy and his truth.

David's Michtam, &c.] Because nothing can be alleged concerning the word *Michtam*, save conjectures, I will hereafter say nothing of it. Also, no more certain reason can be alleged why the Psalm should be entitled *Destroy not*, and therefore the interpreters vary as in an obscure and doubtful matter. Some think it to have been the beginning of an old song. Some think that when David had no way to escape, he was forced to cry out, *O God, destroy me not*. Others think that by this saying is commended David's generosity, who withheld Abishai from his fury when he ran upon Saul to have killed him; for in the sacred history there is put this rebuke, *Destroy him not*. But as David had prayed before, this opinion cannot suit the place. Wherefore we must choose one of the other two: either that the Psalm was set to the notes of some common ballad; or else that David meant to have this petition, which was wrested from him by sudden fear, briefly noted here as appertaining to a matter worthy to be remembered.

2 Have mercy upon me, &c.] The repeated petition shews that David was straitened with no slight sorrow, care, and fear. But the manner of seeking mercy must be marked; namely, that he trusted in God. And there is a covert force in the word *soul*; as if he should say, he had hoped even from the bottom of his heart: and that his hope was not fleeting, as they term it, but had struck its roots deep into him. The same thing repeats he again by and by in a metaphor; saying, That the shadow of God's wings shall be a covering for him. For although the word *סֶלָה* signify now and then *to trust*, as I have translated it; yet, as it imports also, *to lodge*, or *to shroud*, I mistake not that it should be taken so in this place, where mention is made of the shadow of his wings. The effect tends to this; that seeing David has committed himself wholly to the protection of God, he may now feel that which we shall see in Ps. xci. 1; namely, that they who dwell under the protection of God, rest in a safe and high place. But of the likening of God's protection to the shadow of wings we have spoken heretofore; for God, to allure us to him the more familiarly, saith that he spreadeth out his wings like a hen, or a bird, to cherish us. So much the less excusable then is our unthankfulness and frowardness, if we come not running apace to so gentle a calling. Moreover, he says not simply without circumstance, that his hope shall be settled in God, but that it shall be settled in him at such time as iniquity

shall pass by as a storm or a whirlwind. Except, perhaps, some had rather translate the word *חַיִּים* *power*, or *might*. But howsoever it be, David affirms that his refuge shall be in God, and that his wings shall be to him instead of a covering, until all the storms of afflictions be overpast; and surely, although we have leave now and then to sun ourselves in fair and calm weather, yet, because this life is daily subject to many sudden storms, it behoves us to gather in our hope unto God, that he may brood us under his wings. To hope, he adds prayer. For it cannot be but that they who trust in God must direct their prayers to him. And therefore David proves his hope by the effect of it, because he will flee to God in time of need. And he invests God with a glorious title: namely, that he accomplisheth towards him whatsoever he hath promised; or that he will bring to pass the work that he hath begun. For I take the word *נִמְרָא* to be put here in the same sense as in Ps. cxxxviii. 8, because the reasoning is the same in both. And to establish the perseverance of our hope, we must bear this in mind, that God, because he forsaketh not the work of his own hands, doth fully in all points accomplish the welfare of the faithful, and will always be their guide, until he have brought them to the end of their race. Others translate it, *to God which rewardeth me*; but it is flat. In my judgment it would suit better to translate it, *to God that faileth me*. And then must the sentence be resolved adversatively in thiswise: Although God fail me at this time, and reach not out his hand to help me, yet will I cry unto him. A more constrained exposition is this: I will cry unto God who accomplisheth, or thoroughly executeth, his rigour towards me. And the context requires that it should rather be referred to God's benefits, so that we may always bear in mind the steadfastness of God in continuing his goodness, because he leaveth not the work of his hands incomplete.

4 *He will send from, &c.*] I have already told you often, that David intermingles godly thoughts with his prayers, to comfort his sorrowing heart, as it were by setting before his eyes the fruit of his hope. So now he glories no less in God's help, than if he felt his hand present. Where he says, *He will send from heaven*, some supply *his angels*. But in my opinion the indefinite manner of speaking seems to suit better; namely, that God should manifest the saving health which he was about to send, not darkly nor after a common manner, but mightily and with a palpable miracle. David therefore by this saying means, that he hoped for a mighty and singular kind of deliverance. And so he contrasts

heaven with earthly or natural means. That which follows may be expounded two ways: they that translate it *from the reproach*, supply the letter *ו*. But perhaps it would be as fit to take it as put in apposition, thus; *He will preserve me to the reproach of him that swalloweth me up*. Nevertheless, the participle *שׁוֹמֵר* might be taken for *one that waiteth*, as if David had said, Truly mine enemies gape greedily for my destruction, and lie in wait privily to catch occasion to harm me, but God shall deliver me, to their shame. For God is said to strike our enemies with shame and reproach, when he disappointeth their hope. Now as David heretofore promised himself wonderful and altogether heavenly deliverance, so now he says he hopes for the same through God's mercy and faithfulness, and he takes them to be as his helping hands.

5 My soul is in the midst of lions; I lie among them that burn among the children of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

6 Be thou exalted above the heavens, O God; and thy glory over all the earth.

7 They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down; they have digged a pit before me, and are fallen into it themselves. Selah.

5 *My soul, &c.*] He describes again the cruelty of his enemies, that he may the sooner incline God to help him. First he likens them to lions, secondly he says they burn with malice or implacable hatred, and that their tongues are like spears and arrows. That which he adds concerning their tongue, may aptly be understood of their venomous slanders, which pierce deeper to wound the guiltless, than any swords. We know that David's chief encounter was against false accusations wherewith the wicked oppressed him. Now when we hear that a holy man was assaulted so cruelly and variously, let us not think it hard that we should be drawn into the same lists; but let us hold ourselves contented to put up our complaints to God, to whom it belongeth to restrain false tongues and wicked hands from doing harm. And therefore soon after, David calls upon him as his avenger. For although this prayer seem to be alien from the matter; to say, *Be thou exalted above the heavens, O God; and thy glory over all the earth*; yet if we consider how great the frowardness of the ungodly is, and how careless their pride is, when God winketh at their misdeeds, we may soon perceive it was not spoken without cause. Especially seeing

that Saul and all the realm conspired together, it behoved God to raise him up after some notable manner, to cast down that haughtiness. And hence there redounds to us a singular comfort, when God sheweth that he succoureth us to guard his own glory. For the wicked triumph no less over him than over us; but he will not abide any impeachment of his glory, nor expose his holy name to their scoffs. Afterwards he returns to complaining, and whereas he said before that he was cruelly vexed, now he complains that there are ambushes and snares laid for him. He says his soul is bowed down, as fearful men are wont to shrink in themselves, and as birds when they are afraid of hawking dare not stir a feather, but lie flat upon the ground. Others translate it, *He hath bowed down my soul*. But the other sense is more simple, and the verb כָּפַח is often taken neutrally. And although the word נָפַח be of the feminine gender, yet in other places it is joined also to words of the masculine gender.

8 My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready: I will sing, and give praise.

9 Up my tongue, up viol and harp: I will awake early.

10 I will praise thee, O God, among the Gentiles: I will sing unto thee among heathen people.

11 For great is thy goodness unto the heavens; and thy truth unto the clouds.

12 Be thou exalted above the heavens, O God; and thy glory over all the earth.

8 *My heart is ready, &c.*] Some expound this נָכִין, *is established*, and the word signifies as well *to establish* as *to make ready*. If this translation be adopted, the sense will be, that David did thoroughly, and a long while before, purpose in his heart the praises which he has now performed to God; as if he should say, I burst not forth suddenly to thanksgiving, as some men do, but I have bent myself to singing God's praises with a steady and constant purpose of mind. Nevertheless, the other translation pleases me better, that David should say he comes cheerfully to the singing of God's praises, according as we say in French, *Je suis dispos, ou délibéré*. Now, although this forward willingness, when it proceeds from earnest affection, commonly carries steadfastness with it, yet was it behoveful to apprise the readers what the Hebrew word imports. David then

opposes his ready heart as well to the lip-labour of the hypocrites as to the blockishness of others; as if he should say, He is fired with unfeigned zeal, and having shaken off all sloth, and bid adieu to all encumbrances, is wholly bent on this freewill offering.

9 *Up my tongue, &c.*] David expresses, in poetic style, that vehemence and earnestness of his heart. For he calls to him his tongue, his viol, and his harp, that they should be ready with him to praise the name of God. Not without cause have I translated the word כָּבוֹד, *a tongue*. For although it be most commonly taken for glory, yet it appears by many places that it is also put for a tongue, as we have said in Psalm xvi. And this signification the very text itself requires, wherein soon after mention is made of a viol and a harp; as if David should say he will praise God's name as well with sound of voice as with instruments of music. He gave the first place of pre-eminence to the heart, to which he joins the confession of the mouth, and, thirdly, he adds the furtherances that may kindle his desire more. If any man choose to take the word הָעֵיר transitively, it will be all one. For he that is thoroughly awakened to praise God, fails in no part of it.

10 *I will praise thee, &c.*] As David promises that the nations and people shall be witnesses of his thankfulness, we gather that in these afflictions he represented Christ; and it greatly concerns us to know the same, that our estate may stand before our eyes as it were in a glass. And that in these words he had an eye to Christ's kingdom, appears, first, by the authority of Paul, Rom. xv. 9, and, secondly, also by plain reason. For although God's praises may be sung among rocks and stones, yet were it absurd to say, I will preach the name of God to deaf men: whence it follows that the Gentiles were to be called to the knowledge of God, that this preaching might reach to them. Afterwards he touches briefly what matter he will take to sing upon; namely, that the goodness and truth of God fill the whole world. We have told you heretofore, that it is not for nought that he takes his beginning from God's goodness, and afterwards adds thereto his faithfulness. For God is not led to be forward and bounteous in promising by any other motive than his own free goodness. But lest this his facility might seem to want steadfastness, all his promises are ratified by the praise of faithfulness and truth. In the end of the Psalm he turns again to praying that God would not by his forbearing increase the frowardness of the ungodly, and by that means deface his own glory. Unless perhaps, after he has here prophesied of the calling of the

Gentiles, he also make a petition for the hastening of it forward; as if he should say, Lord, not only in Judah make thy power to shine forth by helping the innocent, but also execute thou thy judgments through the whole world, and assert thy dominion over all nations.

PSALM LVIII.

This Psalm consists of two parts. For, first of all, David maintains his own uprightness against the slanders of his enemies. And when he has complained that he bears sore wrongs at his enemies' hands unworthily, and that he is assaulted no less by their knavery and stratagems than by their open cruelty, he appeals at length to God's judgment, and wishes them such destruction as they have deserved.

[To the chief chanter, "Destroy not," David's *Michtam*.]

2 Speak ye righteousness indeed, O ye congregation? Judge ye aright, ye sons of men?

3 Nay, rather ye imagine mischief in your heart; and your hands weigh out cruelty upon the earth.

4 The ungodly are become strangers from their mother's womb: even from the womb are they gone astray, speaking lies.

5 They have poison, even like the poison of a serpent; even like the deaf adder that stoppeth his ear;

6 Which hearkeneth not to the voice of the wizard that charmeth, be he never so cunning in charming.

2 *Speak ye the truth, &c.*] David, boldly challenging his enemies with an interrogatory, shews what great confidence he has in a good cause. For when we dare call for witness from the adversary, we shew that there is no doubtfulness in the matter. For if our cause were not clear, it were a foolish presumption to call our enemy to witness. David then, being assured of a good conscience, steps forth freely, and disproves the fond slanders wherewith they charged him before the simple sort, and that even by the judgment of themselves; as if he should say, You yourselves are witnesses of mine innocence, and yet you wickedly vex me with forged crimes: how is it, then, that you are not ashamed to oppress a guiltless person thus without cause? Now, it is to

be considered who they are whom David finds fault with. He terms them first a *congregation*, and afterwards *sons of men*. For they that think the word אֱלֹהִים to be an epithet of *righteousness*, and translate it *dumb*, are wide from David's meaning in my judgment. Nevertheless, the interpreters agree not upon the word *congregation*. Some suppose that David's enemies are invidiously glanced at, because they had their meetings to consult upon mischief; according as wicked persons are wont oftentimes to lay their heads together to do harm. Notwithstanding, I rather subscribe to the opinion of others, who think that David, in terms of respect indeed, but by way of concession, speaks of Saul's councillors, who assembled about his destruction, as it were to consult of the commonweal. Others, that join the letter כ to the word אֱלֹהִים, come to the same meaning. But as that device is far from the letter, it is better to retain the former natural translation. David therefore speaks to that assembly, which Saul called to him under pretence of a lawful council, to oppress the innocent. But perhaps it is in disdain that he terms them *the sons of men*, withdrawing from them that which he had granted them for form's sake, because they were rather a rout of murderers than a session of judges. Unless any man like rather, that when David saw himself assaulted with an overpowering band, and that wellnigh all the minds of the commons were forward to join that wicked faction, he was of so high a courage that he despised that multitude. Now we are taught by this place, that although God's servants are assailed by the whole world, yet no terror prevents their laughing to scorn kings themselves, and their counsels, as well as the offscourings of the people, provided their consciences be clear. And let us learn, by David's example, to lean upon a good conscience, although the whole world be deaf, and so to appeal to God's judgment-seat. Austin, who understood no more than the Greek translation, disputes here curiously, that men have power to judge aright in general propositions, but as soon as they come to particulars they are lost, because the faulty affections darken or deprave their just conceptions. Truly this is a plausible saying, yea and also profitable, but nothing to the purpose of David.

3 *Nay, rather, &c.*] After having complained of their gross shamelessness, he now attacks them more directly for imagining wickedness in their hearts and executing it with their hands; and therefore I translate the word נַא *nay, rather*. For I doubt not but that after David has cleared himself of their false slanders, he proceeds yet further, and brings their faults to open light. The second member may

be translated two ways; either *ye weigh out cruelty with your hands*, or *your hands weigh out cruelty*. Still, as there is no alteration in the sense, let the readers follow which they like best. Now when he says they *weigh out*, for they work or execute, some think the meaning of the metaphor to be, that these counsellors oppressed David under the pretence of equity, as though he had been a traitor and a rebel against the king, and a disturber of the common peace. And no doubt they coloured their tyranny with honest titles, as hypocrites are wont to do, who though they have no colour of truth, yet always pretend somewhat. But as the word פלס has a larger scope, and is taken to *direct* or *make fit*, perhaps the sense will be the plainer to say, that they put in order, or concert the wickedness which they had conceived in their heart. The portion *upon the earth*, I take to imply as much as *openly*; so that he should find fault here with their unbridled liberty, for that they executed not their cruelty in secret, or in corners only.

4 *The ungodly are become, &c.*] He enhances their wickedness in that they began not of late to give themselves to sinning, but were by nature disposed to iniquity. For we know that many, who otherwise are not of evil disposition by nature, are either carried away by inconstancy and heat of lust, or corrupted by evil examples, or else by some occasion abandon themselves to evil. But contrariwise, David avouches his enemies to be imbued with naughtiness from their mother's womb; as if he should say, that treachery and cruelty were born with them. For although we are all born faulty, and sin is bred by nature in all the posterity of Adam, so that they can do nothing aright as long as they are led by their own nature, yet we know that the greater part are restrained by the secret bridle of God, so that they give not themselves over to all kind of wickedness. Although then the corruption of original sin reign in all mankind, yet does experience shew, that there are some who have a sense of shame and of becoming manners; some infected with corruption in a limited degree, and others of so froward a nature, that they are utterly intolerable. It is therefore this unbridled depravity which, in the general corruption of mankind, excites abhorrence, which David avouches to reign in his enemies; as if he should say, he has to deal with monsters of iniquity.

5 *They have poison, &c.*] He proceeds in his amplification; and although his enemies burned with cruelty, yet he rather upbraids them with their virulence, according as we have seen in other places. For whereas others translate it *fury*, it seems not to agree with the similitude of *adders*.

Neither is it repugnant to the etymology of the word, which is derived from *heat*. For we know there are some kinds of poison that kill with their coldness, and others that consume the vital parts with sweating and burning. The meaning therefore is, that David's enemies are as much filled with venomous malice to do mischief as serpents. Afterwards he portrays more expressly their knavish craftiness, saying they are like to deaf adders, that stop their ears against the voice of the charmers; as if he should say they are not of the common sort of serpents, but in wiliness they pass the sliest adders of all, that can best guard themselves against the arts of the charmers. If a man demand whether there is any art of enchantment, I answer; If there were no enchantments it were a childish and fond saying which is spoken here; for he would take a similitude from that which was not: unless any man perchance think rather that David speaks according to the error of the common people. Nevertheless he seems to give an intimation that serpents are enchanted with witchcrafts; and so much one may admit without peril. And in old times the Marsians in Italy were believed to excel in this craft. Surely if there were no enchantments, it were in vain for the law of God to forbid them and condemn them, Deut. xviii. 11, yet do I not grant that there is any method or art in enchantments, but that it is done by the mere sleights of the devil, to whose deceivableness God giveth a loose reign among the blind, that is, the unbelieving, but suffereth him not so to mock his servants, upon whom he shineth by his word and his Spirit. But if we would cut off occasion of curious questions, let us follow that which I touched upon just now, that David borrowed this similitude from the common error; as if he had said, There is no wiliness to be found in serpents which reigns not in these men; yea though some adders are fortified by their cunning against enchantments, yet are these men as crafty as they.

7 O Lord, break the teeth of them in their mouths, crush the jaws of the lions, O Lord.

8 Let them shed away as water, let them go their ways; let them bend their bow as if they should break themselves.

9 Let him vanish away like a snail that melteth; and as the untimely fruit of a woman, that seeth not the sun.

10 Before your pots feel the thorns, let as it were a whirlwind carry him away like raw flesh.

7 *O Lord, &c.*] Now comes he to cursing them, and appeals to God for vengeance, according as it is his peculiar charge to withstand the violence of the ungodly, while they work trouble to the guiltless. But here the order is to be marked, that David first complained of the wickedness of his enemies, and brought forward a good conscience, before he called God to him to be the advocate or judge of his cause: for it is not in anywise to be hoped that he will undertake the maintenance of bad causes. Now he desires in this verse, that God would by his power break the wicked and restrain the rage for mischief wherewith they are inflamed. For by the word *teeth* he means that they are as greedy of rending and tearing in pieces, as wild beasts. Which he expresses more plainly in the second member, by comparing them to lions; whence it appears how outrageously they rushed to his destruction. In the next verse and in the other following, he goes on with the same meaning, and garnishes it with most apt similitudes. First he desires God to make them flow away like water, that is to say, most swiftly: by which saying he manifested no ordinary faith. He saw his enemies furnished with great power and wealth, he saw them sustained by deep roots, and their strength most securely grounded; finally, he saw them to be like the stony cliffs; nay rather, as the whole people were incensed against him, he saw many rocks cast in his way, the very beholding whereof might cast down his courage with exceeding fear. Therefore to pray God to melt such great hardness, and to make such huge heaps run away like water, was a mark of rare faith and constancy. For it was an incredible thing, unless he had advanced God's power above all the impediments of the world. There follows another similitude, that their attempts may pass away without effect. For the sense of the words is, that when they shall have bent their bow, their arrows should fall down in vain, as if they were broken. Forasmuch then as their cruelty was implacable, David desires that their attempts may be disappointed. Moreover, he could not have made this prayer except he had been armed with unconquerable courage, so that he could submit the dreadful preparations of his enemies to the pleasure of God; nay rather, in so praying, he throws all their power under God's feet. This circumstance therefore is to be marked; that we faint not in our prayers, although the arrows now made ready menace deadly wounds.

9 *Like a snail, &c.*] These two similitudes aim at the same mark as the first; namely, that they should be made to vanish quickly like watery things. It might seem a mockery to liken most sturdy giants to cockles or snails, saving that David

attributes this honour to God; that he is able in an instant, and without any pains, to shake in pieces, and to bring to nought, whatsoever is accounted invincible in the world. But considering God's judgments with the eyes of faith, he hopes that that strength of theirs, upon trust whereof they extend their consultations to ten ages, may be dissolved at once. And he seems to allude to the sudden startings up of the ungodly, as if he should say their destruction should also be hasty like their first coming up, lest they vainly pride themselves in their speedy advancement. They are like the *untimely fruit of a woman*; for if we consider how much time they swallow up in vain confidence, we shall easily believe that before they begin to live they were drawn back as it were from the very starting-posts.

10 *Before your pots, &c.*] In this verse, partly by reason of the doubtful words, and partly by reason of the perplexed structure of them, there is some obscurity. Inasmuch as סִירוֹת signifies both *a pot* and *a thorn*, there may be elicited a twofold sense; Before your thorns grow up into a bush, that is to say, before they grew up to any great height or thickness, or else, Before your pots feel the fire, that is kindled of the thorns. If we expound it *of pots*, then will the word *quick* be taken for *raw flesh*, according also as I have translated it. But if we expound it *of thorns*, then will it be taken for *young and tender*. Nevertheless the prophet's meaning is by no means ambiguous. For by these words he denotes the hasting of God's vengeance, and therefore he prays that they may be swept away as it were with a whirlwind, either before they come to their full growth of strength, as prickles harden into thorns, or before they grow ripe, as the flesh that is boiled in the pot or caldron. Notwithstanding, this latter sense seems to flow best; namely, that the wrath of God should with boisterous violence sweep away the wicked like unsodden flesh, and such as has scarcely yet felt the first warmth of the fire.

11 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance; he shall wash his hands in the blood of the ungodly.

12 And man shall say, But there is fruit for the righteous; but there is a God that judgeth the earth.

11 *The righteous, &c.*] Although he seem to attribute to the righteous an affection very far from godly meekness, yet if we bear in mind that which I have said often heretofore, namely, that David commends the pure and well-ordered

affections, there is no absurdity at all in this, that the godly, by the guiding and government of the Holy Ghost, should take joy in God's judgments. For whence comes it that men commonly do cruelly rejoice at the destruction of their enemies, but because they are carried away with the troublesome passions of hatred, envy, and impatience, so as they covet revenge without measure? Therefore, where the flesh gets the upperhand, there is nothing right or pure. But he that by the zeal of the Spirit conforms his mind to the just vengeance of God, he shall no less rejoice aright as often as he sees punishment laid upon the ungodly by the hand of God, than lovingly wish their conversion, that they may be saved. For as God's mercy prevents him not from being a rigorous judge in due season, when no respite can procure amendment, nor his rigour is repugnant to his mercy, so also the righteous would gladly call back their enemies to the way of salvation by bearing wrongs quietly, and would rather they should amend than perish. Still, when their own wilfulness has brought them to the ripe time of vengeance, the godly have just cause of rejoicing, because by this means they perceive their own life to be precious in God's sight. Therefore, as they groan and are grieved as long as God winketh at their afflictions, so it cannot but be a pleasure to them when wickedness is paid its rightful reward.

12 *And man shall say, &c.*] From the cause and end of the joy, such as it is described here, it appears that this affection is clear from all fault in the saints; although he seems to extend that generally to all men, which he had spoken before of the righteous only. But as this confession cannot apply to any but the faithful, who have eyes indeed, I think they only are denoted under the name of *man*, yet with this consideration, that David means that many, who were stricken and troubled, shall return to a quiet mind. Then, although he mean none but the children of God, yet does he aright to speak indeterminately, as it were of a multitude. For we know how many are shocked through the confusion and disorder of things in the world, who at the appearance of God's justice pluck up their hearts, so that their judgments are changed on all hands, as soon as God hath reached his hand out of heaven. This confession therefore shall extend far and wide, according also as says Isaiah, xvi. 9, *When thy judgments appear, O God, then shall the inhabitants of the earth learn righteousness.* Now, although the word **Y** do now and then but simply affirm, yet as it often amplifies, I doubt not but that in this place there is to be understood an antithesis between the temptation, with which the weak minds are

troubled during the time that God delayeth his vengeance, and the trust which they conceive from his judgments. Therefore, by the adversative particle *but*, they repel that doubting which is wont to creep on them by God's dissembling and forbearing, as though being, awakened from sleep, they should rebuke their own drowsiness. And it is no small advance towards godliness, to be well and thoroughly persuaded that the righteous lose not their labour by walking carefully in the fear of God. And therefore Isaiah, iii. 9, bids the children of God labour for his wisdom, *Say ye the righteous shall be well at ease, he shall eat the labours of his hands*. For unless the fruit be forthwith answerable to the uprightness of the righteous, all men's minds are slippery and prone to distrust, as though God, laying aside the care of the world, passed his time inactively. Of which matter we will treat more at large in Psalm lxxiii. He adds a reason why the children of God are not without fruit of their godliness; namely, because *God is the judge of the world*. For if the world be ruled by the providence of God, it cannot be but that at length he must shew how he maketh a difference between the good and the bad. The word *earth* is used purposely, because worldly men, thinking that fortune bears sway in the world, enclose God's dominion within the bounds of heaven.

PSALM LIX.

The title, which will be given presently, declares upon what occasion this Psalm was written, which is in a manner like the one before. For in the first part of it, that he may accuse the wrongful cruelty of his enemies the more effectually, he affirms that he has given them no cause to be so set against him. And when he has complained of their wrongful dealing, he calls upon God for help; and after he has encouraged himself to good hope by holy musings, he prophesies of their unhappy end. Finally, he promises that he will be mindful of his deliverance, so as to shew forth God's grace.

[To the chief chanter, "Destroy not," David's Michtam, when Saul sent, and they watched his house to have killed him.]

2 Deliver me from mine enemies, O God; lift me up from them that rise up against me.

3 Deliver me from the workers of wickedness; and save me from bloody men.

4 For, behold, they have laid wait for my soul;

strong men are gathered together against me : not for my sin, not for mine offence, O Lord.

5 Without fault *on my behalf* they have run and made themselves ready : arise to meet me, and see.

6 And thou, O Lord God of hosts, thou God of Israel, awake to visit all nations : pity none of them all that transgress maliciously. Selah.

The history whereof mention is made here is known. It is certain that when David was besieged in his own house by a band of soldiers, 1 Sam. xix. 11, and the guard sent by Saul beset all the passes of the city, there was no hope of escaping, or of life left. Now although he slept away by his wife's contrivance, yet sought he not for safety elsewhere than in the mercy of God. And truly, although Michal devised that artifice to beguile her father's soldiers, yet is it certain that the godly man was not delivered otherwise than by the wonderful defence of God. Therefore the *watching of the house* is put here as if it had been said he had been cooped up at that time in the straits of death : for there were men sent from Saul, not to take him alive, but to kill him.

2 *Deliver me, &c.*] To encourage himself the more to call upon God, he describes the mighty power of his enemies. For by the word *rise up* he denotes, not only their boldness, or their bold and fiery assaults, but also their strength, whereby they overmatched him ; and yet he desires to be lifted up on high, that he may be as it were above this waterflood. And this manner of speaking must be marked, that we doubt not but it lies in God's power to preserve us, though our enemies tower over our heads. In the verse following, he not only says he is overwhelmed, but also complains of the wrongful and wicked cruelty of his enemies. Afterwards he comprehends both together ; namely, that he is destitute of strength to resist, and yet that he endures those so sore and hard assaults without any offence of his. Now I have told you heretofore, or rather I have oftentimes repeated to you, that the clearer the faithful are in their own consciences, so much the more boldness have they to seek God, because they have the freer access, inasmuch as they maintain the cause that God maintaineth. For as God is the maintainer of righteousness, and the advocate of good causes, he wagemeth war against all who assault the innocent. First, therefore, he complains that he is oppressed by a powerful conspiracy, and that he is beset by treason ; whence it follows that there is no help remaining

for him in the world. Afterwards he comes down to the avouchment of his innocence. For although God, by plaguing his servants, chastise their sins, yet David justly exempts himself from all fault in respect of Saul, and by this means assigns to God the judgment of his innocence, which was oppressed by unrighteous calumnies among men. Whatsoever they boast, says he, there shall no wickedness or offence be found in me. And although they came not in order of battle, he says they *run* or *bestir them*. By which words he means that they omit nothing that diligence may require, so greedily indeed were they bent to destroy an afflicted man.

5 *Arise to meet me, &c.*] He alludes to the hasting of his enemies of which he has spoken, that God should be no less speedy in helping him than they were hasty to harm him. Nevertheless, to win himself favour before God, again he makes God himself witness and judge of his cause. Moreover, when he says *see*, he mingles the understanding of the flesh with the doctrine of faith. For as though God had unto that day passed over all wrongs with closed eyes, he beseeches him now to look up and *see*; and this is done in consideration of the weakness of the human mind. Notwithstanding, in attributing the power of *seeing* to God, he acknowledges by faith, that nothing is hid from God's foresight. Howbeit, it is to be noted, that David babbles not thus after the manner of men, without being thoroughly persuaded that his own afflictions, together with his innocence, and the wrongful dealings of his enemies, are already known to God. But by this word he lays forth the whole matter to be examined by the judgment of God. In the next verse he pursues the same sentiment more earnestly: and first he garnishes God with new titles, calling him *the God of hosts*, and *the God of Israel*; by the former of which he commends his infinite power; and by the other, his peculiar regard which he beareth towards his children, and towards the whole church. Also the pronoun *אתה*, *thou*, is of great force; as if he should say, It is no more possible that God should renounce the office of judging, than it is possible that he should deny himself, or cease to be God. And he requests him to visit all nations: not that the examination of the cause which he pleads occupied so large a field; but he reasons from the more likely to the less, in this-wise: Seeing that not even the heathen and the aliens escape the vengeance of God, a more certain and more horrible judgment hangs over the intestine enemies, that under the title of brotherhood are troublesome to the godly, and break the order established in the church by God.

Although then David was not at war with all nations, yet, by requesting God to visit them all, he shews that it would be against reason for him to suffer the household enemies of the church to rage with impunity. At the same time, also, he wrestles against temptation, wherewith it is likely that he was sorely harassed. For he was assailed, not by four or five wicked persons, but a huge multitude; yet he raises himself up against it, considering that it is the peculiar office of God, not only to bring a few to subjection, but also to take punishment of the offences of the whole world. For since he extended God's judgment to the uttermost borders of the earth, he ought not to be afraid of such a multitude, which was but a small portion of mankind. Although (as we shall see again presently) this may, not unfitly, be understood of the Israelites, which were divided into their tribes as it were into nations. And in prohibiting God's mercy from the wilful transgressors, no doubt that he designates the reprobates only, whose wickedness was past recovery. Howbeit, it behoves to bear in mind that which I have touched upon before; namely, that David was as well void of interested zeal, as clear from all violent discomposure. Therefore, besides that he knows the persons of whom he speaks so sorely, to be already appointed to damnation, with a pure and calm zeal of the spirit he pleads the common cause of the church, rather than his own. And therefore there is no reason why they should allege his example, whom their own private grief moves to thunder out anathemas.

7 They will return in the evening, bark like a dog, and go about the city.

8 Behold, they will prate with their mouth: swords are in their lips: for who shall hear?

9 But thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them: thou shalt jest at all nations.

10 I will keep his strength unto thee: for God is my defence.

7 *They will return, &c.*] He likens his enemies to hungry and mad dogs, whom hunger forces to run about in all directions without ceasing; and by this means he vituperates their insatiable cruelty, who, burning with desire to do harm, put no bounds to their meddling. For he says they return in the evening; not that they rested all the time before, but because they proceeded in their malice with unwearied earnestness. Though they have profited nothing all the day

long, says he, yet shall a man find them running up and down in the eventide; and aptly does the similitude of barking apply to express their dreadful assaults. In the next verse he describes their fierceness. For by saying that they prate, or that they spit out at their mouths, he means that they utter their wicked purposes openly and without dissimulation. For although the word נָבַע signify metaphorically to *speak*, yet as it properly imports to *bubble up as a wellspring*, it seems to denote more than simply to speak. The meaning is, that they not only consult secretly in corners to the destruction of the innocent, but also that they utter what they have purposed in their minds openly and with bragging. Therefore, whereas it follows that *swords are in their lips*, it implies that they breathe nothing but murder, or that they vomit forth as many swords to cut the innocent person's throat as they utter words. At length he adds that the reason why they run to such a pitch of extravagance is, that they fear no shame that may come of it. Now, although it be likely that David, according to his ordinary manner, touches here the brainsick fondness of the ungodly, who to shake off fear imagine God to be asleep in heaven, yet in my judgment he complains that they so much the more carelessly hold their wicked counsels, and publish them as it were in the open market, because they had long exercised the privilege of doing mischief. For they had so bewitched the whole commonalty, and so defaced David with their slanderous reports, that no man durst open his lips in excuse of the wretched soul. Nay rather, the more spitefully any man persecuted the poor soul in the king's behalf, so much the more was he set by, as a hearty defender of the commonweal.

9 *But thou, O Lord, &c.*] Against these impediments David nevertheless raises up himself to the hope of better things. And he uses fitly the similitude of laughing, thereby to exalt God's power the higher; as if he should say, When the ungodly have practised all that may be, God undoeth all their devices easily, and as it were in sport. For as long as God winketh, their insolence increases and breaks forth more petulantly; because they understand not that God when he seemeth to sit still executeth his judgments with his beck only. Therefore, by way of contempt, he says that God needeth no great preparation, for as soon as he list to punish them, he will bring them to nothing as though it were play to him. And by this means he inveighs the more pointedly against their blind fury, because while intemperately vaunting their own might, they feign God to lie asleep. That which is added in the second member con-

cerning all nations, tends to this purpose, that although they were as many in number as the whole world, yet should they be made a laughingstock with all their riches and power. Although it may be resolved thus, *Like as thou jestest at all nations*, it is manifest that David mocks the foolish arrogance of his enemies, who upon trust of their own multitude dared attempt anything.

10 *I will keep his strength, &c.*] The obscurity of this place has made the interpreters wrest it sundry ways with their inventions. But none of them wrest it more violently than they that imagine that there is a changing of the person in the relative *his*, as if David, speaking of himself, should put the third person for the first. Perhaps what moved as well them as the Greek translator, was this weak reason: because in the last verse there is read, *I will sing my strength unto thee*, or *my strength shall sing unto thee*. But when we come to that place, it will appear sufficiently how aptly David transfers that to himself which he had spoken before of Saul. There is no doubt, therefore, that the relative *his* is to be understood of Saul. Some also expound this particle apart by itself, *that the strength is Saul's*, because he is far the superior in strength, so that the victory is already in his hand. Others connect it together thus: Although thou be his strength to-day, O God, because thou upholdest and maintainest him in his kingdom, yet shall not I also cease to hope, till thou lift me up into the royal seat, according as thou hast promised. More nearly to the mind of the prophet come they who, reading in one strain, *I will keep his strength unto thee*, elicit this sense; Although mine enemy boast himself without measure upon trust of his own strength, yet will I abide quiet, because I know that whatsoever he goeth about is bridled by secret providence. And surely all men must be brought so into order, as that we may make their attempts and their strength subject to the pleasure of God. Nevertheless, methinks there is another translation that agrees better; namely, *My strength is unto thee: I will keep*. According as also, in the end of the Psalm, I doubt not it is to be translated in the nominative case, *My strength is unto thee: I will sing*. As to the effect of the matter, it makes no great difference: for David mounts up into the watch-tower of faith, from whence he looks down without fear upon the violent assaults of his enemy, assuring himself he can do nothing except God will give him leave. Now, if you read these two severally, *His strength belongeth unto thee, I will keep*, the meaning will be the plainer. For, in the first place, David claiming for God power to govern the whole world, gathers that his enemy is reined with a secret

bit, and that all his strength depends elsewhere, so that he cannot stir one finger but by the leave of God. Afterwards he adds that he will be of a quiet and calm mind, to await patiently for whatsoever shall betide. For the word *keep* signifies in this place as much as, I will hold in myself, or I will quietly wait what it pleaseth God to do. And in this sense is it taken in the conjugation Niphal: Isaiah, vii. 4. Here indeed it is put in the conjugation Kal; but this does not hinder but that we may translate it, *I will mark in silence what end soever God shall vouchsafe to give*. By the way, I do not disapprove of the observation made by some, that David alludes to the guards sent to beset his house; as if he should say that he on the contrary part has another watch, while he waits to behold with a quiet and settled mind what God will do.

11 The God of my mercy shall prevent me, God shall make me to see *my desire* upon mine enemies.

12 Slay them not, lest peradventure my people forget; make them to wander in thy power; and cast them, down O Lord our shield.

13 The sin of their mouth, the talk of their lips; let them be caught in their pride, and let them talk of cursing and lying.

11 *The God of my mercy, &c.*] The affix of the third person is written here, but the point which denotes the first person is added. The Greek interpreter has translated it in the third person, and Austin uses this text oftentimes against the Pelagians, to prove God's grace goeth before all the merits of men; piously indeed, but too curiously. Like as also he often alleges the last verse, to disprove whatsoever of freewill men challenge for their own strength. I will, says he, keep my strength unto thee; that is to say, Men must submit themselves meekly and humbly to God, because they have no strength at all, but such as he giveth them. Sure it is a joyful thing for a man to say that he keeps his strength unto God, when attributing no strength to himself without him, he depends wholly upon his only strength. Also it is a holy and profitable doctrine; but we must be well advised that we wrest not the scriptures. Without doubt, the word קדם signifies here, but *to meet betimes*. Neither means David aught else, than that God's help shall be ready at hand to preserve him in due season. The effect therefore is, that howsoever God forbear or delay his help,

yet will he step in even at the very crisis. And truly if the immoderate heat of our desires did not drive us headlong, we should well enough perceive God's diligence and speed in helping us. But while we make too much haste, he seems to us to be too slow. Moreover, to strengthen his faith, he terms him the *God of his mercy*, because he had often found him by experience to be merciful. For the proofs of former time gave him assured hope of like grace hereafter. For the exposition of some, who take it actively, as though David should attribute the praise of mercy to himself, is both cold and constrained; but the passive form of speech is familiar.

12 *Slay them not, &c.*] David wisely sets this before him as a ground of patience. Unless God bring our enemies to nought forthwith, we imagine that they have escaped out of God's hand; and although he waste them away by little and little with a lingering and slow destruction, yet think we not that he layeth his punishment upon them. Therefore, as almost all men gape with perverse impatience for the sudden destruction of their enemies, David, restraining himself, weighs God's judgment even in the lighter sort of evils under which the reprobates consume away. True it is that except our own sluggishness sealed up our eyes, God's vengeance is more apparent in the sudden destruction of the ungodly; but because the remembrance of it slips away soon, David, not without cause, wishes to have the same sight renewed day by day, that the knowledge of God's judgment may continue fixed in our hearts. Howbeit, as I have said, he arms and fortifies himself against the weariness of longer delay, with this doctrine; that God deferreth the final punishment advisedly, lest if he should sweep them away in one moment, the remembrance of it would soon be obliterated. And thus he indirectly rebukes the unthankfulness of the people of Israel, for profiting so ill in the manifest judgments of God. This disease reigns too much in the world even at this day; that the judgments of God, which are more apparent than that they can be passed over with eyes shut, are buried in darkness through wicked forgetfulness; so that we have need to be brought daily to the theatre where we must behold the hand of God, whether we will or no. Then let us bear this lesson in mind, whenever God doth not forthwith hurl his bolts against the wicked, nor take them out of the world, but consumeth them by wearing them away by little and little. Further he requests that God will *make them to wander*; that is, that being afflicted with misery and poverty, they should wander here and there, and never find comfort for their grief; which is expressed

better in the other word, *make them to go down, or cast them down*. For his desire is that they should be pulled down from their honourable estate and be cast as it were under foot to be a continual spectacle of God's wrath by their misery and reproach. Therefore, when some translate the word חֵיל, a *host* or *army*, and take it for God's people, it is too constrained. David rather appeals to God's power to destroy the ungodly, because upon trust of worldly helps they thought themselves impregnable. Moreover, that he may the more easily obtain his request, in the end of the verse he shews himself to plead the cause of the whole church. For to that purpose makes the plural number, *the Lord our shield*. And truly, inasmuch as he was chosen king by God, the welfare of the church was included in his person. And therefore was not he assaulted alone, but the whole realm in him, the welfare whereof God's will was to provide for by this means. The same also is the reason why he patiently suffered God to be master of his own judgments, that he might keep the people continually meditating upon them.

13 *The sin of their mouth, &c.*] Some interpreters supply the word *for*, that this verse may connect with the sentence that went before. And no doubt here is a rendering of a cause why it should be right that they should be buffeted, and wander always without stay or rest. Nevertheless, the abrupt and defective form of speech will apply very well; as if David should say there needs no long examination, because their wickedness betrays itself openly in the wantonness of their tongues. Sin, says he, appears in their mouth; because they blurt out their pride and cruelty with full cheeks. And this sense is confirmed by that which follows immediately after; *let them be caught in their own pride*. For he points out the fountain of their stateliness, that they so petulantly and remorselessly oppressed an innocent with their big words. Afterwards he shews specially how they uttered their wickedness with their own mouth, saying that *they talk of cursing and lying*. By which expression he means that they creak of nothing but horrible curses, and that they are wholly given to deceits and slanders. They that take the word ספר passively, and interpret it, that the ungodly shall be an example of God's vengeance, as in whom he hath engraven sure and ever-recurring marks of the same, they seem to go too far from the purpose of David.

14 Consume them, consume them in thy wrath, that they may not be: let them know that God is he

that beareth rule in Jacob, even unto the ends of the earth. Selah.

15 And they will return in the evening : they will bark as a dog, and skulk about the city.

16 They will prowl about for meat : and if they be not satisfied they shall also fast all night.

17 As for me, I will sing of thy strength : I will praise thy mercy betimes in the morning. For thou hast been my fortress and my refuge in the day of my trouble.

18 My strength is unto thee : I will sing. For God is my fortress, even the God of my mercy.

14 *Consume them, &c.*] David seems at variance with himself, in that he now imprecates utter destruction on his enemies, whom just now he would not have slain so speedily. For what should he mean by *consuming in wrath*, but that God should quickly despatch out of the world such as were to be destroyed, and not inflict any limited or lingering punishments upon them. But no doubt he speaks of a totally different time. And so the disagreement is easily taken away, because those who have been a long time appointed to example, he devotes to utter destruction at length, that is, when the full time of their ripeness is come. We know it was the custom of the Roman emperors, after they had led their prisoners about the city whom they had reserved to the day of their triumph, as soon as they came to the capitol, to deliver them into the hands of their lictors, that they might be massacred forthwith. Even so David prays now, that when God hath suffered the wicked to remain alive for a time, until he have triumphed solemnly over them, they may at length be delivered to destruction. And these two things agree very well together, that God's judgments should be set before our eyes a long continuance of time, lest the remembrance of them might slip from us, and yet nevertheless that when the world is sufficiently taught that nothing remains to the reprobates when God is displeased with them and bent against them, but lingering consumption, they should then be led speedily to their destruction, that such a spectacle may the better awaken the minds that are drowsy, or take less heed of lighter punishments. Therefore he adds, *That they may know to the uttermost ends of the earth how that God is he that beareth rule in Jacob*. For whereas others, inserting the copulative *and*, translate it, *That they may know that it is God*

that beareth rule in Jacob, and in all other regions of the world; I like it not, and it perverts the sense. For David denotes rather some especial kind of punishment, the report whereof may come even to the furthest nations, and strike a fear of God even into the blind and heathen. But particularly he will have God's dominion known in the government of the church: for it might seem very much against reason that things should be so confused in the place where God had set up a regal throne for himself, so that his sanctuary should differ nothing from a den of thieves.

15 *And they will return, &c.*] It matters not greatly whether we read these words in the future tense, or resolve them into the optative mood, so that David should continue his praying: howbeit, I willingly incline to the opinion that after David had made an end of his prayers, now he conceives hope of happy success which he had wished. And it is an elegant allusion to that which he had said erewhile of their ravenous hunger. For he repeats not the words now in the same sense that he had used them in before; but in the way of irony he says they shall be hungry after another sort, and that it shall betide them otherwise than they looked for. Heretofore he complained that they barked like dogs; namely, because they were carried away with insatiable desire and rage to do mischief. But now, sneering at their wicked attempts, he says that when they have tired themselves with doing the worst they can all the day long, they shall be disappointed of their longing. Therefore this rejoicing at their vain and disappointed diligence, is contrasted with his former complaint. In the end of the 16th verse, some will have the portion, *אם לא*, *If they be not*, to be a form of oath. But as they wrest the words of the prophet too subtly, I assent not to their device. Others will that the denial is repeated twice, thus: *If they be not satisfied, neither will they tarry all night*. But this also seems to be far-fetched. But the plain and native meaning offers itself unforced; that although they shall not have had their fill, yet they must be fain to get them to bed. And by this circumstance the misery of their hunger and famine is increased the more, that when they have spent all the day in begging, without relief, they must nevertheless be fain to bring a fasting and empty belly to bed.

17 *As for me, I will, &c.*] By these words he not only means that he shall have occasion to sing, but also addresses himself already to giving of thanks. And he confesses that his deliverance shall be first a mighty work of God's power, and secondly a free benefit. True it is that David at that time escaped privily and quietly out of the hands of his ene-

mies by the policy of his wife. But because God by this stratagem eluded the preparations and force of Saul, he is worthily said to have put forth his strength. Notwithstanding, David, being admonished by one example, seems to have extended his reference, and so to have comprised the sundry helps which he had felt by experience from time to time.

18 *My strength is unto thee, &c.*] He expresses more clearly that he is beholden to God for his safety. For by resigning to God the praise of his strength, he leaves nothing to himself. First, he had said that the strength of his enemy came from God, and now he avouches the same of his own strength. But he elegantly puts the doubtful expression in a different sense. For God holdeth the strength of the wicked to keep it in and to bridle it, or rather to shew that the strength which they challenge to themselves is deceitful, or none at all. And in the meanwhile, upholding his servants, he ministereth strength unto them, that they may never quail. Heretofore then he gloried that he should be out of danger, because Saul, being bound by the secret providence of God, was not able to lift up so much as one finger. And now, how weak soever he himself be, he avouches that there is strength enough for him in God, and therefore adds that there is just cause for him to sing; even as the Spirit, by the mouth of James, v. 13, encourageth the merry and cheerful to sing. What others read, *I will sing my strength unto thee*, the readers see is somewhat harsh. And therefore I doubt not that these two are distinct and several members, according as I have hinted before.

PSALM LX.

David being now placed on the royal throne, and having gotten some signal victories, which might avail to the establishment of his kingdom, proclaims and extols God's grace, and that not only to witness his thankfulness, but also to win the rest of the people, who as yet refused to come under his yoke, and so to gather the dismembered people into one body. And after he has said, that the manifest signs of God's blessing shine forth, which witness that he is chosen king by God, he specially calls back the faithful to the oracle of God, that they may perceive that they grow together under the auspices of God, if they with their consent allow the anointing that was performed by Samuel. At the same time he also intermixes prayers, that God will vouchsafe to finish what he hath begun.

[To the chief chanter, upon "*Susan Eduth*," David's *Michtam*, to teach.]

2 When he fought against the Syrians of Mesopotamia, and against the Syrians of Soba, and that Joab returning home had slain the Edomites in the King's Dale about twelve thousand.

To the chief, &c.] As I have spoken of the former part of the title heretofore, I have the less to do now, saving that I say again, that *Susan Eduth*, which they translate *the lily of witness*, or *the lily of beauty*, seems to me to be the beginning of some common ballad. What afterwards is added, *to teach*, is generally referred to the fact that this Psalm was given to the Levites to learn by heart. But others with good reason repudiate this device, because a peculiar title would not be suitable in a matter that is common to all the Psalms. Therefore it is more likely that here is denoted the kind of doctrine that is convenient for this Psalm. And one may conjecture that since David, being adorned with so many famous victories, did not, however, as yet enjoy the kingdom in quiet, by this expression he denoted the end that he purposed; namely, that all party feuds abolished, they that before were rebels, yielding to so many proofs, might now at least acknowledge him to have been created king by God: as if he should say, At least let experience teach you that my reign pleases God, since he honoureth it with many blessings in the eyes of men. I now come to the circumstance of the history and the time. This Psalm seems to be as it were a triumphal ode on the

victory that he got over the Syrians, and other nations confederate with them. Because the Hebrews reckon Mesopotamia and other countries to be within Syria, which they name *Aram*, they are compelled to distinguish it afterwards into several parts, like as in this place Syria, *נְהָרִים*, is put for Mesopotamia, which certain of the Latins, imitating the Greeks, have called *Interamnis*. Next is put Syria, *צוֹבָה*, which, not without reason, some guess to be Sophene, because it lies along the bank of the Euphrates. And in 2 Sam. viii. 3, it is said, that Rohob, king of Soba, was slain by David when he made a voyage to get the dominion of the river. There also is put in the third place Syria of Damascus, which is a portion of Judah, and consequently adjoining to it. Also in other places of the scripture, Syria is extended more largely; and according to the diversity of the places, other titles are added to it. But as even at that time, that Syria which borders upon Judah made war upon David, and he vanquished the army that came from thence to help the Edomites, and the Ammonites also, here arises a question, why he names none but the inhabitants of Mesopotamia and of the country of Soba. It seems likely to me, that mention was made of the far nations, forasmuch as they had put men in greater fear; for it was a more notable token of God's favour, that David's kingdom was extended so far off. Therefore, passing over the neighbouring countries, David reckons up the far nations, and such as were terrible for their fame only, the slaughter of whom was, for the strangeness thereof, almost incredible. And whereas in the sacred history they are numbered twenty-two thousand, and here the title specifies but of twelve thousand, the solution is easy. For there Abishai is said to have given that army the overthrow, the slaughter whereof is referred here to Joab his brother. But at the same time it is to be noted, that they divided their army between them. Now, considering that Abishai was inferior in degree of honour and in authority, it is no marvel, though when both of them gave the overthrow together, the praise of the whole victory is ascribed to the general of the field; even as also, in 1 Sam. xviii. 7, all this is attributed to David, under whose auspices it was done. By the way, also, it is likely that about one-half of the number was slain in the general battle itself, and the rest were slain by Joab while dispersed in the rout.

3 O God, thou hast put us back, and scattered us :
thou art angry with us ; return unto us.

4 Thou hast made the land to quake ; thou hast

made it to part asunder : heal the bruises thereof ; for it is shaken.

5 Thou hast shewed thy people hardness ; thou hast made us to drink of the wine of amazedness.

3 *O God, thou hast, &c.*] That he may the more effectually stir up himself and others to consider God's gracious goodness, he begins with praying. For here is put in a comparison, whereby it may the better appear that Saul was cast off by God, so that he should not reign. Therefore, after he has complained of the miserable and sorrowful dispersion, he prays God to restore things to a better state, and to shew himself favourable to his people : for what some suppose, namely, that David speaks of his own afflictions, agrees not so well. I confess, indeed, that he was severely tried before he obtained the kingdom. But seeing he combines himself with the whole people, and bewails the miseries of them all in common, I doubt not that by comparison he sets forth God's grace, which immediately from the commencement of his reign had shone upon them after a new sort. In this manner, therefore, he laments the grievous and protracted miseries, whereby the church had been in a manner smitten to the earth under Saul. And this is worth noting, that although he had felt his own countrymen to be his sorest and cruellest enemies, yet now, when he had obtained the crown, he forgets all their wrongs, because he is mindful of his own calling, and therefore comes into God's sight as one of the people ; and he speaks of *scattering*, or *dispersing*, as the chief evil ; for by the discomfiture, or consuming of Saul's power, the land was so completely left as a prey to the enemy, that no man could have a secure retreat in his own house, but all were ready to run away, and forsake their own country. Afterwards he again describes this desolation metaphorically, saying that the land is no less defaced than if it had been cleft with an earthquake. For he means not that the earth was rent asunder, but that the state of the realm was so decayed, or brought under foot, that misery was to be seen in all places, such as is wont to ensue after a quaking or opening of the earth. For since the time that Saul fell from God his affairs began to go to wreck, till he himself utterly perished, and left the whole realm forlorn and given up. Surely all men were at that time in very great fear and amazement, and the seed of Abraham was a laughing-stock to its enemies ; neither would they have refused the yoke, if there had been any tolerable condition of bondage

offered them. By these signs David shews that God was utterly estranged from Saul, and therefore he discloses the well-head of all miseries, in saying that God was wroth. Nevertheless he calls upon him that wounded to be the surgeon, beseeching him to heal the breaches.

5 *Thou hast made, &c.*] First he says that the people were roughly handled, and by and by he enhances the bitterness of the miseries with a similitude, that they were drunk with the wine of drowsiness, or giddiness. Not even the Hebrew interpreters themselves agree about the word תרעלה. For many translate it *venom*, or *poison*. But it is easy to gather that the prophet speaks specially of a poisoned potion, that bereaves men's minds of sense and understanding; as if he had said that the Jews had been astonished with their miseries. For his purpose was to set before their eyes the curse of God that had reigned in the time of Saul; that laying aside all wilfulness, they should cease to uphold with their aid the throne that was rejected of God.

6 Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, to display it before the truth. Selah.

7 That thy beloved may be delivered, help with thy right hand, and hear me.

8 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice: I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

9 Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine: and Ephraim is the strength of my head: Judah is my lawgiver.

10 Moab is my wash-pot: over Edom will I cast my shoe: Palestine, shew thyself glad of me.

6 *Thou hast given, &c.*] Some change the preter tense of the verb into the optative mood, that it may be a continued prayer. But David, rather by intermixing rejoicing with his prayers, admonishes us that in the alteration which had happened there appeared an evident token of God's favour. Therefore he gives God thanks in the name of the whole realm, for raising up a banner to cheer their hearts, and to gather them together as it were from their dispersion. The portion *before the truth*, which follows, is in my opinion taken in a spiritless and jejune sense by such as think God was therefore favourable to the Jews because they were found to be true and upright. For we know that the great men were double and treble traitors, and that all the com-

mon people, together with their head, were truce-breakers. For all of them, even from the first to the last, had conspired to quench God's grace. And therefore I doubt not but that David means that God's truth rose again out of darkness, at what time the church began to be restored suddenly beyond all hope. For who would not have thought that God's promises had been void in so desperate an extremity? Therefore, when David was set upon the throne, at the same time came forth God's truth, which had been smothered a long while. And although this benefit were bestowed upon the whole realm, yet does David give us to understand that God had respect to his worshippers, though they were but few in number, to consult for their welfare. Afterwards he returns again to praying; unless, perchance, one prefer that the beginning of the verse, *That thy beloved may be delivered*, should be joined with the former sentence, whereunto I freely give my consent. For David commends the greatness of God's grace even in the very variety of it, in that he had encouraged his people to raise up a banner, who being before without hope of escaping, were brought to utter distress, so that they had assuredly perished if they had not been delivered by miracle. And whom he called before the fearers of God, them calls he now the beloved of God. By which expression he gives an intimation that God doth not so yield reward to his worshippers, but that he hath at the same time an eye to his own free love. In that he annexes prayers, we are taught that although God have advanced us with his benefits, yet must we always meekly and humbly beseech him to go forward still with his work.

8 *God hath spoken, &c.*] Hitherto he has touched upon the experiences, by which God's new, and now for some years unwonted favour might be perceived; namely, in that he had made his people, from miserable, flourishing; and so turned their fortune, that a second victory followed the first, and a third the second. And now, which was the chief thing, calling back the people's minds to the promise, he says that God had testified with his own mouth what he afterwards ratified by effect. For howsoever God overwhelm us with innumerable examples of his grace, yet will not the knowledge of them flourish unless the lamp of the word light men to it. And this might be read as well in the person of the whole people as in the person of David. And truly, although David speak personally, yet separates he not himself from the whole body, over which he was set to be the head. Therefore, if the examples of God's grace suffice them not, he bids them lift up their minds to the oracle by

which he was appointed king with glorious encomiums. And he says that God spake *in his holiness*; which as I like not to be understood of the Holy Ghost, because it seems too curious a device, so I know not whether it ought to be understood of the sanctuary. For we read not that the answer was given unto Samuel there. Therefore will it be more correct to retain the term *holiness*, because, that the oracle might have full credit, he had declared his own constancy, and consequently the efficacy of the promise, by many tokens. Therefore, as there was no ground for doubt left, he gives an honourable title to the thing that was promised by the mouth of Samuel. And soon after he adds that he himself rests chiefly upon this word of God. For although he had obtained many victories, which doubtless had increased his courage, yet he means that he derived more joy from the witness by word of mouth than from all other signs. And verily, although all God's benefits ought to avail much to cheer us, yet does faith worthily obtain the highest place, as that which is able to put away all deadly sorrows, and to quicken the dead with spiritual joy. Moreover, he not only says that he rejoiced in himself, but also calls all the godly to the fellowship of his gladness. Afterwards he rehearses the sum of the promise, but in suchwise as that in the very narration he declares the certainty of his own faith. For he speaks as it were of a thing well known to him, and out of all doubt; and he makes his vaunt that he will do the thing which God hath promised. I will, says he, *divide Sechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth*. He names those parts which came late into his possession, and the Psalm seems to have been made at the same time that they remained in the possession of Saul's son. Therefore, as David had an arduous contest about these countries, he says that though it be long first, yet shall they come under his yoke, because God hath vouchsafed to give his word for the matter. The same reasoning applies also to Gilead and Manasseh. With regard to Ephraim, as that tribe was most populous, he deservedly calls it *the strength of his head*, that is to say, of his principedom. Furthermore, that length of time may purchase the more credit to the promise, he adds in the end *that Judah shall be his guide*; as if he should say that Abraham's offspring cannot otherwise coalesce as they ought unless they be gathered together under the tribe of Judah, or under a captain that shall descend from that tribe, because it was so prophesied long ago by the patriarch Jacob. For he alludes to that prophecy which is reported by Moses, Gen. xlix. 10, *The sceptre shall not go out of Judah, &c.* And there also is put the word מְחִירֵק, which

they translate a *lawgiver*, or a *lawmaker*. Hereby therefore it is certain that the kingdom cannot be stable unless it be settled in the tribe of Judah, because God hath not only decreed it from the beginning, but also avouched it as his will. Moreover, this is more aptly referred to the whole realm than to David, as I warned you just now that he does not so much speak in his own name as take upon him the character of the whole church.

10 *Moab is my washpot, &c.*] Now he passes on to the foreigners, whom he distinguishes broadly from his own people. For it behoved him to reign over the children of Abraham as his brethren, and not as over bondslaves. But over the heathen and uncircumcised it was permitted him to execute a severer jurisdiction, that he might subdue them by force. Yet is it not lawful for conquerors to fetch from hence a cloak for their tyranny, that they may at their pleasure oppress the nations which they have subdued by battle. For they must have an eye to God's commandment, wherein they differ far from David, who not only was endued with royal power, but also was appointed by God to be the avenger of the church, especially against those implacable adversaries, who, having lost all sense of humanity, ceased not to trouble their own kinsfolk. In way of contempt he says that the Moabites shall be his washbowl to wash his feet in, for we know that the washing of feet was in ordinary use among the Eastern people. The same reasoning applies to the casting of his shoe over Edom. For it is a token of reproach, because as they had proudly trampled upon the elect people of God, so were they also to be treated like slaves. That which follows concerning Palestine is ambiguous. To some it seems to be a sort of taunting speech, as though David should upbraid the Philistines with their vain boastings, because when their strength was unabated they were wont to rail upon him insolently. And the word רוע signifies not only to shout in rejoicing, but also to make a noise as soldiers do when they encourage themselves to battle. Others expound it simply of slavish applause. For howsoever their stubborn hearts hated the yoke, yet were they compelled to flatter their conqueror, as we have seen in Psalm xviii. 45, *the children of strangers shall lie unto me.*

11 Who will lead me into the strong city? who will lead me even unto Edom?

12 Wilt not thou do it, O God, which hadst put us back? and didst not go out among our hosts, O God?

13 Give us help of our trouble, for vain is the help of man.

14 In God shall we do valiantly, and he shall tread our adversaries under foot.

11 *Who will lead me, &c.*] Now in the way of anticipation he proceeds further, and says that he looked for the residue at God's hand, until he have taken the strong holds of his enemies and gotten complete victory of them. For as many still made vigorous resistance, he might seem to glory before his time. But as God hath promised that all people that were his rivals should come under his power and subjection, whatsoever distress or dangers he sees remaining, he proceeds cheerfully, having God for his guide as to certain victory. Some take this strong city to be Raboth, which was the metropolis of the Moabites. But others more truly teach, that there is a transposition of the number, and that David speaks indefinitely of all the cities of his enemies, upon trust of whose succour they were determined never to yield. But he avouches that God shall be his guide in winning them, like as he gave him victory in the field. And once again by a comparison he amplifies the grace that had shone upon them under his reign, that he may prove thereby that his calling is lawful and holy. God, saith he, who had heretofore forsaken us, and suffered us to war unsuccessfully, shall now open me the gates of the cities, that I may break through all the fortifications of mine enemies.

13 *Give us help, &c.*] Again he returns to praying, or rather that same assurance of hope which, we have seen, leads him to the desire of praying. And he says that if God help him, though there come no other succour from elsewhere, his hand alone is sufficient to save him. For thus is it written word for word, *and vain is man's help*; as if he should say, Lord, even as thou needest none other helper when it pleaseth thee to put forth thy power, even so, as soon as thou shalt have shewn thyself favourable to us, we shall have no need to seek any more for man's help, for in the blaze of thy power all worldly helps disappear. Notwithstanding, because the copulative *and* is almost by universal consent turned here into the causal particle *for*, I also willingly admit this interpretation. And would God, this sentiment were settled in our hearts. For whence thoroughly cometh it that the whole world in a manner wavers or conceives vain hopes to fill themselves with wind, neglecting God, but because no man appreciates the salvation of God; which alone ought to suffice, considering that whatsoever helps are offered us by

men without that, are but deceitful sleights? For whereas he matches man's help, which is none at all, against God's help, it is an improper manner of speaking; as that is to say, because we foolishly imagine sundry helps to ourselves in the world, he, by way of concession, gives the name of a thing to our forgeries, which are nothing. For if God at any time use the hand of men in preserving us, he doth not either resign his office to them, or deck them with his own spoils. In truth therefore, even the help which God giveth us by men, is to be accounted the help of God. But David meant nothing else than that it is but counterfeit, whatsoever help is looked for anywhere else than from God alone. This sentence he confirms in the last verse, because we neither can do anything but by his power, and we are of invincible power when he helpeth us. For what he speaks consists of two members; that is, that *In God we shall do valiantly*; that is to say, as soon As God shall have withdrawn his grace from me, all the strength that is thought to be in them, decays and disappears; and again, That they who are strong in God only, are endued with consummate valour, so as they are fit and able to overcome all difficulties. And lest he might seem to sprinkle God with but half the praise of doing valiantly, he afterwards challenges the whole work for him, when he adds that *he shall tread his enemies under foot*. Now if in fighting against men, it be not lawful to part the praise of doing it between ourselves and God, how much less tolerable a profanation is it to set the strength of free-will against the grace of the Holy Ghost in purchasing salvation, as though it were an equal match? Whosoever, therefore, challenge for themselves, apart from God, the least drop of power, cast themselves down headlong through their own arrogance.

PSALM LXI.

Although this Psalm begin with praying, or at least reports the prayer that David made when he was bowed down with great grief, yet is the greater part of it employed in giving praise and thanks to God. For he declares that he was delivered by the hand of God from some great peril, whatsoever it was, and established on the royal throne.

[To the chief chanter upon Neginoth, David's.]

2 Hear my cry, O God; give ear to my prayer.

3 From the uttermost bounds of the land will I cry unto thee, when my heart is tumbled; thou shalt lead me into the strong-hold which is above me.

4 For thou hast been my hope, the tower of my strength from the face of mine enemy.

5 I will dwell in thy tabernacle for ever; I shall be safe under the covert of thy wings.

2 *Hear my cry, &c.*] Although it be not very certain at what time this Psalm was made, yet the most likely conjecture is that David had awhile enjoyed the kingdom, when he fell into these snares of which he speaks here. And I willingly subscribe to the opinion of those that refer it to the time of Absalom's insurrection. For except he had been driven out he could not have cried from the uttermost borders of the land, which he says in the second verse that he will do. Furthermore, in the prayer itself he denotes vehemence of affection by the word *cry*. For whether he made his moan to God with a soft voice, or lifted up his voice loudly, yet is the inward earnestness and heat of his zeal fitly compared to crying out. Also the repetition of it shews that he persevered steadfastly in praying. And this diligence of his must be an example to us not to be weary of praying, although God make it not appear immediately that he favoureth our requests. By the *uttermost bounds of the land*, I doubt not but he denotes the place of his exile, so that he was prohibited from access to the sanctuary and the royal city. For though some take it allegorically, as if he should say he prays out of a deep pit, methinks it is not sufficiently supported. And as he afterwards names himself king, which we read not that ever he did before the death of Saul, it is easy to gather that he denotes the time when he fled fearfully from the rage of his son Absalom, and hid himself in the desert of Nahum, and in other retreats. For as God had chosen mount Sion as well for the ark of the covenant to dwell in, as for the king's seat, David says he is driven out into the uttermost corners of the land, because he was cast out of the chief part, and the part that he most desired. Now if David, under the shadowy service of the law, ceased not to pray though he were driven as an outlaw, far from the sanctuary; there can be no excuse for our slothfulness at this day if we mount not up into heaven by faith, whatsoever hindrances Satan cast in our way, seeing that God allureth us so gently to him, and that the way is opened unto us by the blood of Christ. Therefore, if any

are barred from the preaching of the word, and deprived of the sacraments as though they were banished from the church of God, let them learn by the example of David to cry unto God even out of the very desert, be it never so far off. Afterwards he makes mention of mourning and heaviness; and thereto adds that he was shut out from all refuge, that God's grace might shine in the very escape therefrom. Because the word חָסַד signifies sometimes *to cover*, or *wrap up*, some translate in this place, *when my heart is rolled about*; as if he should say that his heart is tossed up and down, or that his heart is on the fret. But this translation is somewhat harsh. More correctly others translate it, *when my heart is wrapped*, or *overwhelmed*. I had rather follow that which is the simpler; and yet I reject not that metaphor. Howbeit, by this part he testifies that his heaviness prevented not his fleeing to God. Of the outward temptation we have spoken just now; that when he was removed far from the sanctuary, he bounded over the distance that was between him and it, so that he directed his cry unto God; and now he confesses that he has not a heart of iron or benumbed with stoical hardness against griefs and troubles; but that he had even within himself, a hard encounter against heaviness and sorrow of heart. Therefore, the more the faithful feel themselves distressed with grief or thought, so much the more it belongs to them to strive that they may break through these hindrances. And his drift is this; that God would receive him into the safe sanctuary, from which he seemed to be excluded. For by the name of *rock*, or *strong-hold*, he means sure protection; from this, he says, he is withheld, because he cannot move one step unless he be stayed up by the hand of God. For when he looked round about him, he thought that all places of safety and quietness were after a sort drawn up on high, so that he might not come at them. He complains therefore, that all helps are taken from him, and withdrawn far away. But in the mean time, although there appear no way of deliverance, yet he doubts not but he shall escape if it please God to extend to him his hand. Therefore, the simple sense without figure is; Although all helps be withdrawn from me, and the whole world block up all outlets, yet shalt thou, O God, deliver me against hope. Which doctrine is singularly worth noting, that we may learn that the help which is to be looked for at God's hand, is not to be measured by the natural understanding of the flesh, nor depends upon the second causes which present themselves to our sight; but that we must leave the secret means of

help to God's pleasure. For whosoever takes upon him to prescribe to God what he shall do, seems wilfully to force God's infinite power into narrow bounds.

4 *For thou hast been my hope, &c.*] Either he calls God's former benefits to remembrance to strengthen his faith, or else he now rejoices in his present deliverance. For either of them are probable. For as nothing more effectually encourages us to hope well, than the remembrance of God's grace, which we have known and seen; David exercises himself often with meditating on it while he is at his prayers, because however, he spends the rest of the Psalm in thanksgiving, it were not against reason to take the beginning of his thanksgiving from hence. Howbeit, if this sense be approved, the particle 'ו will rather affirm, than render a cause. Truly, in the verse following, he boasts confidently, that from henceforth he shall always have a place in the sanctuary of God. For as to what some think, that being yet an outcast, or an outlaw, he promises himself that he shall return again, I am not sure that it is applicable. For he seems rather to rejoice in his own restitution, than seek matter of comfort afar off, to assuage his grief. Which will appear better by the sequel. And although he were returned to his palace from banishment, yet he prefers the service of God before his royal dignity, riches, glory, and delights. For as he shews in another place, that among his sorest miseries none grieved him so much, as that he wanted the exercises of religion, so now he esteems it a greater point of happiness to lie humbly before the altar, than to sit on the royal throne. Howbeit, immediately after, he shews that he did not under those outward figures worship God superstitiously as men of gross conceptions were wont to do, for he chooses his resting-place *under the shadow of God's wings*. For whereas the ignorant herd confined God to the visible tabernacle, David, admonished by this outward token, lifted the spiritual eye of faith upward. And yet I deny not but that when he speaks of the shadow of God's wings, he alludes to the cherubim. Only let this be constantly observed by us, that David stayed not himself upon worldly elements, but was carried upward to seek God, and to worship him spiritually.

6 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows; thou hast given an inheritance to them that fear thy name.

7 Thou shalt give the king a long life; his years shall be as one generation upon another.

8 He shall dwell for ever before the face of God : make ready mercy and truth, they shall keep him.

9 So will I sing to thy name for ever, that I may pay my vows daily.

6 *For thou, O God, &c.*] He confirms what I said just now of his quiet abiding under the wings of God. For hence arises his sudden joy, that God having hearkened to his prayers, had turned his darkness into light. In the word *vows* there is a figure synecdoche. For as in praying he made vows, under a part he implies the whole. The effect is, that although he had wisely taken his time to gather strength, and had been helped by the favour of the priests and the strenuous exertions of his soldiers, yet he recovered not his state but by the assured and manifest working of God. If the letter ה were in the word אר, there were no doubt but he would say generally, that God had given the inheritance to his worshippers. But now another sense may suit tolerably well; namely, that the inheritance which should descend to all the worshippers of God was given to David. Nevertheless, I more willingly embrace the general sense, that God never disappointeth his servants, but rewardeth them in the end with everlasting felicity, when they have gone through the encounters and troubles with which he exerciseth and trieth their faith. For David covertly derides the foolish boldness wherewith the ungodly vaunt themselves in prosperity as long as God forbeareth or spareth them. For that happiness of theirs, wherein they sooth themselves, is but imaginative, and vanishes away forthwith. But David, by the term *inheritance*, teaches that the servants of God enjoy, not a vanishing prosperity, but a steady and substantial gladness. For the temporal and light afflictions wherewith they are tried are furtherances to eternal salvation. Therefore he gives God thanks that he gladdeth not his worshippers for two or three days, but establishes them in an assured and steadfast life, assigning it to them as the inheritance of a piece of ground. And certainly, seeing that the ungodly possess not God's benefits by faith, they live as it were but for a day, on plunder: for the true and lawful fruition of goods resides only in the worshippers of God.

7 *Thou shalt give, &c.*] This rejoicing cannot be restrained to the person of David. For although his life was prolonged to extreme old age, and that he died full of days, having quieted the state of his realm, and delivered the succession of his kingdom to his son, yet went he not

beyond the age of one man; yea, and the greater part of his life was piteously spent in many miseries, cares, and sorrows. Wherefore there is no doubt he continues that series of years, yea and of ages, even unto Christ. For we have told you often already what was the condition of his kingdom; namely, that God should defend that one people gathered together under one head, and bring them together again when they were dispersed. But now that succession belongs also unto us. For Christ must live, not only in his own person, but also in his members, even unto the end of the world; according as it is said in Isaiah, liii. 8, *Who shall declare his generation, or age?* For although that divers tempests and storms, and divers assaults of enemies, daily threaten many overthrows to the church, yet the prophet avouches that it shall continue alive throughout all ages; and David prophesies the continual propagation of the kingdom, even to the very coming of Christ himself.

8 *He shall dwell for ever, &c.*] It is a plainer expression than when he said just now, *I will dwell in thy tabernacle*. For he says he shall be out of fear, and quiet under the protection of God, because he shall have him as the keeper of his life. For there is no doubt but that by *God's face* is denoted the providence and fatherly care which he taketh of those that are his. And surely among so many perils that besiege us round about, we should not be able to stand one moment, if the eye of God did not preserve us in safety. Therefore the true stability of blessed life is this, when we are persuaded that it is governed by God. Now follows the other demand, that God should appoint his mercy and faithfulness to preserve and maintain the king: of which demand the sense may be twofold. For as gentleness and faithfulness are the true upholders of kingdoms, it were not against reason that David should desire the spirit of meekness or mercy and uprightness, that by this means he might be established in his kingdom. Notwithstanding, in my judgment this other sense will suit well, that God should gird himself to preserve the king with his mercy and truth. For the word מנה signifies not only *to prepare, address, or make ready*, but also *to appoint, or ordain*; as if he had said, that the assured preservation of his kingdom consisted only in the mercy and faithfulness of God. By the way, by the word *prepare, or appoint*, he shews that God hath means in readiness wherewith to preserve his servants. At length he concludes that he will steadfastly and continually exert himself in setting forth God's praises, to perform his vows. Where again is to be marked the harmony between the two parts of calling upon God. For

David flees no less to God for help in the midst of his perils, than he shews himself thankful after he had been delivered.

PSALM LXII.

This Psalm in great part contains meditations, whereby David encourages himself and others to fix their hope upon God, and arms and instructs them against encounters of temptations. And because nothing is more natural to us, than to have our thoughts drawn away from God by the guileful enticements of the world, so that they fly out of our heads and vanish away, he inveighs sharply against this vanity, that he may keep himself and others in God alone.

[To the chief chanter, upon Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.]

2 But yet my soul keepeth silence unto God : from him cometh my welfare.

3 But yet he is my rock, and my welfare, and my strong-hold : I shall not be moved greatly.

Because it is known that Jeduthun was one of the chief singers, some think that the office of singing this Psalm was committed to him. And surely it is likely that in Psalm xxxix. is denoted a singing-man of that house. But here the case appears to be different, because the Psalm is not said to be given to Jeduthun, but to be made *upon* Jeduthun. Whence some conjecture that it was the beginning of some famous song. Howbeit, as the particle *by* oftentimes imports as much as *to, unto, for, before, afore* or *with*, it will not be out of place to suppose that this Psalm was deposited with the posterity of Jeduthun. And thus much briefly concerning the title. If the translation which I have set down be approved, the Psalm will begin upon the sudden, even as sentences that are full of feeling are for the most part defective; and such altogether is the beginning of Psalm lxxiii. For, as we shall see more plainly there, the prophet, calling his thoughts home from the doubtings among which he had been tossed about, as though he would cut off occasion of contrary reasons, avouches adversatively, *yet is God good unto his people Israel*. The same think I also of this present place. We know the minds of the godly are not so well settled, but that it happens to them to be often tossed with alternate fluctuations. Indeed they desire to receive God's word in silent composure, and to hold their peace if he

chastise them, but in the meanwhile many disordered affections break the silence of faith and patience with their tumultuous violence. Whence it comes to pass that men burst forth, and by their own impatience work unquietness to themselves, not less than clamour in the ears of God. As the particle **לְ** is often exclusive, some translate it *only*. And as it sometimes affirms, others express it by *verily, truly, certainly*, or some such word. But a more complete sense is formed by understanding that conflict of contending feelings from which David rids himself by a violent effort, as if he, holding his thoughts captive, compelled them to obedience. Therefore, because Satan had stirred up turbulent affections in him, and with his practices driven him into some intemperateness, now bridling himself, he determines *to be still*. By which word he means that the cross must be borne with a patient and quiet mind, for it is set against the unquietness through which we rise against God. In a word, this silence is nothing else than a settled submission, when the faithful rest upon the promises of God, give place to his word, obey his commandment, and suppress all turbulent affections in their hearts. Some think the word **לְ** to be a formal noun, but because it makes little to the effect of the matter, I care little about it. In the third verse I think the particle **לְ** to be taken adversatively again. For it is not enough for the faithful in temptations to get the upperhand in one battle or encounter, because Satan soon stirs up fresh conflicts for them. Therefore although David has now emerged from the very gulf, yet as he has not yet escaped all hazards, he comes to a second struggle, and we shall meet with this particle six times in this Psalm. And the reason why he adorns God with so many titles, is this, that they may be so many shields to him with which he may receive and ward off the assaults of Satan. In the end of the verse, where he says, *I shall not slide*, or *I shall not be moved greatly*, he intimates that it is possible that he may be pinched with adversity, because he knew himself to be subject to distresses like all other men; but he persuades himself that his fallings shall not be deadly, because God shall put his hand under him. Hereafter he will say simply without any addition, *I shall not stagger*, or *I shall not slide*, perhaps because he had profited so much by praying, that he could despise afflictions more boldly: although he seems to mean the same in both places. And truly although the faithful lie in affliction for a time, yet as they sink not so far but that God at last lifteth them up, they cannot properly be said to fall: nay rather, as God holdeth them up with his Spirit, it is not so much as staggering or sliding.

4 How far will you prolong your treason against the man? Ye shall be killed every one of you, as a leaning mud wall, or as a stone wall that is shaken.

5 Yet consult they of his lifting up, to thrust him down; they love leasings, they bless with their mouth, and curse in their hearts. Selah.

6 Yet keep thou silence to the Lord, O my soul, for upon him is my waiting.

7 Yet is he my rock, and my welfare; my stronghold; I shall not slide.

4 *How far will you, &c.*] Some think the word תהותתו to be taken for thinking or imagining treason. Others interpret it to thrust out the lips in token of scorn. And others translate it *to rush upon one*. To me it seems to suit very well thus: how long will you be thinking upon the man? or, will you not leave imagining mischief to the man in your froward thoughts? For he accuses his enemies of obstinate malice, because they sought all the ways that could be to do him harm, and practised new mischiefs from time to time. By which example we are taught to bear it patiently as often as our enemies proceed with tireless cruelty to practise wicked devices to our destruction, and that Satan also ministers new artifices to them from time to time. But it is to be seen to what end the similitude tends which follows directly after. Some think that the wicked are likened to a leaning wall, which makes as though it would fall continually, even as they in their wickedness are ever sliding, till they fall headlong down. But in my opinion David referred to another thing. For as a mud wall that is ill put together bulges out into a belly, and in a manner doubles its thickness to outward appearance, whereas its inward hollowness tends to ruin, so the ungodly, swelling with the wind of their pride, spread abroad the terror of their consultations. But as a wall that is faulty, and loosely laid within, falls with sudden violence, and not only bursts asunder with its own weight, but also is crushed into small portions, so David denounces to his enemies a sudden fall, and such a one as shall utterly crush them in pieces. For whereas גר, *guth*, signifies properly any inclosure that is made of light and weak stuff; yet there is added an adjective to express a headlong and violent falling. David therefore means, that although his enemies are raised on high, and utter fierce threats from their swollen and haughty stomachs, yet shall they fall suddenly, yea and with a rapid fall, like a wall that is shaken.

5 *Yet consult they, &c.*] I always interpret the particle **78** adversatively, because as David on one side builds his own faith that it may rest steadily upon God's grace, so on the other side he sets forth the practices of his enemies full of pride, cruelty, deceit, and presumption: as if he should say; Although they gain nothing by attempting all that may be, but to throw themselves down headlong, yet are they impelled by such fury, that they cease not to practise always some new device to cast me down. And covertly he gives an inkling, that the war is not made so much against him as against God; as, among the poets, ungodliness is portrayed under the person of the giants. For the enemies of God seem not to themselves stout enough, except they advance their heads above the clouds. First, David speaks in such-wise of himself in the third person, as that nevertheless he means that he was exalted by God. Although it may commodiously be understood to be the exalting or lifting up of God himself, yet the effect amounts to this, that the wicked heave with might and main to thrust him down whom God hath set on high, and desireth to maintain in his high estate. It follows therefore that they undertake war against God, who go about to overthrow his work. Hereto pertains the second member, *that they love leasings*; that is, because, not bearing his lawful calling, they ceased not to invent perverse devices daily, which might recoil upon their own head; as also in Psalm iv. 3, he hath said, *Ye sons of men, how long will ye deface mine honour? ye delight in vanity, and seek after lies. Selah.* Although the name of lie or leasing may also be referred to the covert frauds wherewith they insidiously assailed the holy man. For soon after there follows, *that they blessed with their mouth, when notwithstanding they cursed in their heart.* But howsoever it be, against all treachery, all deceits, and all annoyances, David arms himself with this one thing, that seeing he leans on God's support, he is assaulted in vain by all the engines that are used against him.

6 *Yet keep thou silence, &c.*] It seems to be a sort of contrariety. For he exhorts his soul to do that now which he boasted that he had done before. If his soul kept silence to God already, what needed he to enjoin a new silence, as though it were in uproar? But it is to be noted that our minds are never so well quieted but that they feel secret stirrings; as though a soft gale stir the sea so that billows rise not with great rage, and yet there is some motion of the waves. Since, then, the minds of the godly stay not themselves without some agitations, David, not without cause, bids his soul be silent, which was in quiet already; as if he should

say, he must advance more and more in this silence until he have utterly subdued the flesh, and framed himself wholly to the obedience of God. Again, we see how Satan often excites to new unquietness those who seem to be best settled. Now, considering how unstable and over-prone we are to various disquietudes, we have need to be continually renewed with strength. Wherefore let us not marvel, though David again bid his soul be still, which was inured to silence already. For amidst the provocations of the flesh we never rest perfectly as we ought to do. And there is danger lest our inward calmness should be disturbed by the rising up of new winds from time to time. And therefore let us encourage ourselves to proceed after the example of David. He alleges the cause of his silence to be, that although God answer him not out of hand, yet does he trust assuredly in him. For he says that his waiting is upon God, because he never disappointeth the patience of his servants. There is, says he, an assured reward laid up for my silence, and therefore will I hold my peace, lest mine own hastiness disturb the course of my welfare.

8 Unto God is my welfare and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my hope is in God.

9 Trust in him always, O ye people: pour out your hearts before his face: God is our hope. Selah.

10 Yet are the children of Adam vanity; the sons of men are leasing, so that being weighed together in a balance they are lighter than vanity itself.

11 Trust not in oppression and robbery, lest ye vanish away: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.

8 *Unto God is my, &c.*] He heaps together whatsoever he can to hold himself in, because nothing is more natural to the weakness of our flesh than to slip aside into devious errors. We will confess, in one word, that our welfare is not elsewhere to be sought than at his hand: and yet, distrusting his power, we will covet to purchase succour here and there to supply our defect. Therefore, with how many titles soever David adorns God's puissance to preserve; with so many supports strengthens he himself unto constancy; and with so many bridles reins he the levity of his flesh, lest he should seek any part of his welfare elsewhere than in God. And after he has thoroughly encouraged himself, he turns his discourse to others, and allures them

to the fellowship of his encounters, that they may be partakers with him of the victory and triumph alike. When he says *ye people*, I doubt not but he means the Jews: for before religion and the knowledge of God shone upon the Gentiles, hope and calling upon God could not flourish elsewhere than in Judah. And he plainly distinguishes the chosen people from the heathen nations, as if he should say it were a foul shame if the children of Abraham, to whom God had disclosed his grace, and whom he had received into his protection, should not yield themselves wholly unto him. And by the word *always* he means all times, whether it be of prosperity or adversity, signifying that they do amiss that give place and turn out of the way at every little turn. Therefore, although God try his servants with afflictions, yet David admonishes them that they must stand stoutly in hope and sufferance. For the hypocrites that clap their hands at God for joy in time of prosperity, and quail in their hearts as soon as any adversity happens, foreclose the gate against his power, not without sore wrong to him. Therefore we must give honour to God, and never cease, no not even in sorest adversities, to comfort ourselves with this thought, that the issues of death are in his hand. Furthermore, as men's hearts are contracted into discontent by adversity, and by this fault they do but exasperate God against themselves, and increase their own sorrow, David ministers a very good remedy; namely, that the faithful, by unburdening their cares upon God, should after a sort *pour out their hearts before his eyes*. For so long as the heart is locked up with sorrow, free prayers can never come out of it. Therefore, lest the burdens of temptations might overwhelm us, we must fetch relief from hence; namely, that God will succour our grief, provided we omit not to discharge ourselves of it into his bosom. Moreover, as a certain envious narrow-mindedness, possessing the hearts of almost all men, casts them at length into despair, David's admonition is the more useful. For although all men are no less sagacious than diligent in seeking escape from their own miseries, yet as they skulk from God's presence purposely, they do but make labyrinths to puzzle themselves. To be brief, David corrects the malady that is bred in us by nature, in that we had rather chafe upon the bit by hiding our grief, than ease ourselves by pouring out pious complaints and prayers unto God. Whence it comes to pass, that being wrapped more and more in grief, we are drowned in despair. And what he had spoken of himself alone, he extends to the whole people, avouching that they shall be safe under God's guardianship.

10 *Yet are the children, &c.*] If any man like to take **וְנִ** affirmatively for *doubtless, truly, or verily*, it will be a confirmation of the former sentence; and David will shew, from the opposites, since men are lighter than vanity itself, that there remains nothing but to put all their trust in God. Nevertheless, the text will flow aptly, if we say that, as David saw he sung this doctrine to deaf ears, namely, that the people according to their nature fell away into deceitful hopes, he now cries out for very displeasure. But mere vanity reigns in the children of men. By this means he would condemn the blind unbelief of men, who had rather deceive themselves with vain enticements than lean upon God's promises, which cannot deceive. And because David found so great vanity in the chosen children of Abraham, he pronounces that all mankind is given to lying. For by the adverb **כִּלְכִּל** he means that all men, without exception, seek cause of erring. Now, when we hear that this defect of being lighter than vanity is not condemned in a few, but in all mankind, what shall we say remains to reason, and prudence, and freewill? Neither is it any objection, that God purgeth the faithful of this disease. For if lying and vanity be corrected in them by regeneration of the Spirit, it follows that they were liars by nature. And although the first man was created upright and perfect, yet has he by his fall drawn us into such corruption that whatsoever light was given us of God is utterly darkened. If any man object that yet nevertheless there remain in men gifts of God not to be despised, by which they excel all other creatures, the solution is easy; that although men are garnished with notable gifts, yet are the same corrupted with the infection of sin, and vanish away into nothing. For it is the knowledge of God alone that makes whatsoever gifts God hath bestowed upon us to preserve their excellency. Otherwise they are defiled with the stain of sin, which leaves not a drop of perfect soundness in man. In consideration whereof David cries out, that all mortals are vanity and things of nought.

11 *Trust not in, &c.*] Here David gives us to understand that men trust not substantially in God, before they have put off all deceitful trusts, which are so many diversions from him. Therefore he enjoins all impediments to be taken away, and men's minds to be cleansed from the vices that occupy God's place. And although he touch but certain species, yet by the figure synecdoche, he signifies that man's heart is never purely and unfeignedly devoted to God until it have rid itself of all contrary trusts. By oppression and robbery we may understand as well the very act of extortion, as the things that are evil, and wrongfully gotten.

True it is that by this exhortation is repressed the boldness of men's lusts, which blind their minds, so that they think that all is lawful which they are suffered to do without punishment. The interpreters vary also in placing the words: for some match every noun with its verb, in this-wise; Trust not in extortion, be not vain in robbing, and if riches increase, set not your heart upon them. Others combine extortion and robbery with one verb, and read the word *vanish* indefinitely by itself. Whether of these constructions you choose, it matters not greatly to the general effect: for when the prophet has condemned the insane daring wherewith robbers are puffed up, he marks it by an appropriate term; namely, that it is but a mere illusion wherein men vanish away. Nay rather, the prophet tells us plainly in one word, that all hopes which withdraw us from God to his creatures, are trifling and lying, especially when we covet to enrich ourselves by evil and perverse means. And after he has condemned the wicked desires wherein appears open wickedness, he adds immediately, that we must also beware that riches, yea though they be gotten by rightful means, hold us not devoted to them. Moreover, *to set a man's heart upon riches*, signifies not only to gape too greedily after them, but also to be unduly elated with trust in them, and to be high-minded, as Paul says, Rom. xi. 20. Now how far from superfluous this warning is, we learn by daily experience. For there is nothing more common than for pride to be bred by abundance, and for men's minds to be so blinded with haughtiness, that they become no less insolent against God than wanton in the unbridled liberty of doing mischief. But especially is that furious blindness to be feared, lest he who is drunk with the confidence of his own might, lifting up his brow too high in contempt of God, should lose all sense of his own frailty.

12 Once hath God spoken it ; I have heard it twice,
that power belongeth unto God.

13 And mercy unto thee, O Lord : surely thou shalt
reward every man according to his work.

12 *Once hath God spoken it, &c.*] He concludes that men's minds cannot otherwise be withdrawn from vanity, than by being thoroughly and steadfastly bent to give heed to God's judgment. Therefore since men's minds are hurried hither and thither, or at leastwise waver, because they change with the sundry alterations of the world, David shews that there is a peaceful harbour for us, which is to

rest patiently upon the word of God. But as no man can come to God who dwelleth in inapproachable light, but by the direction of faith, 1 Tim. vi. 16, the prophet sets before us the word, whereby God avoucheth himself to rule the world by rightful authority. And because it concerns us greatly to be established in belief of the word, he commends the certainty thereof. And although these words may be constructed two ways, yet the drift of them is, that God is thoroughly steady in himself, so that there is no change to be feared when he hath spoken the word. Many read it thus; That God hath spoken it once and twice, or the second time; so that the repetition of the words should avail to the confirmation of them, as if he had said that God had once or twice openly avouched his power and goodness, so that it should not be lawful to doubt of it hereafter. And the place in Job, xxxiii. 14, seems not to be much unlike, that God speaketh once or twice. For the words are the same, saving that in that place is added the copulative. If any man prefer this other distinction, *Once hath God spoken it, twice have I heard it*, let him enjoy his own interpretation: for it both agrees well with the circumstance of the place, and also from it is elicited a profitable doctrine; namely, that as God retracteth not his word when he hath once spoken it, it is our duty to meditate long and largely upon whatsoever proceeds out of his mouth; as though David had said, God teacheth us by his word, which must be taken as an everlasting and unchangeable decree; and I have exercised myself oftentimes in his word, lest forgetfulness of this doctrine might creep upon me in process of time. But as the other manner of speaking seems to be the simpler, that God hath spoken it once or twice, I readily incline to the same. Meanwhile, however, the curiousness of those is to be rejected that say he spoke once in the law, and afterwards again in the prophets; for David meant nothing else but that the authority of this doctrine was well established, as we are wont to take that as more fully confirmed and ratified which is oftenest proclaimed. In the mean time let us remember, that as soon as God hath uttered the word, we must make haste to acquiesce in it, and not gainsay it, as some filthy dogs refuse to embrace any doctrine that is not proved by three or four texts of scripture. For even so durst that varlet prate among us, who attempted to overthrow God's free election and secret providence. For David meant not to impose upon God a necessity of speaking often, but to do away with all doubting in that doctrine, which is testified not with doubtful but with express words. Afterwards David by his own example teaches, that God's word

must be received reverently and with godly heed, and not refused with such scornfulness as the greater part of men exhibit it. But as he notes not here indifferently all points of doctrine alike, it is expedient to join with it what he adds immediately after; namely, that if we desire to keep off the waves of temptations with steadfast minds, we must give God's might and mercy their due honour, for that man shall never deviate from the right line, whosoever he is that believes earnestly that nothing happens but by the appointment of God, and that he excelleth no less in mercy than in might. Therefore after that David has made honourable mention of the assuredness of God's word, now he says he is instructed in his omnipotence and goodness. Some interpret it that God is armed with power to help the faithful, and that he is also led by his mercifulness to do it. Nevertheless, more rightly, in my opinion, do others distinguish it, that God is of power to restrain the wicked, how proudly soever they vaunt themselves, or rather that he is strong enough to quell their obstinacy, and to cherish and maintain his own servants, because he never forgetteth his mercy and goodness. Now whosoever shall set his mind upon this power and goodness of God, which it is impious to separate from God, he shall stand upright and quiet even among the sorest buffetings. But when we strip God of his power, as men are commonly wont to do, it is but right that we on the other side be left destitute of the defence, which was able to drive back all temptations from us. Seeing then that the world imagines God to be idle, how should it not tremble at every the least stirring, considering that it thinks itself exposed to the blind assaults of fortune. Hence therefore comes calm quietness, if we make the world subject to God's governance, and submit ourselves and our lives to him. But first it behoves to begin with his mightiness, lest we should doubt that those who live under his hand are not shielded with a secure defence. But to this we must immediately join his mercy, lest any care should vex us. Otherwise, such misgiving as this will rise in our minds; What boots it us that the world is under God's governance? will he therefore help us that are unworthy of his regard? Therefore not without cause does David couple together his might and his mercy. For on these two wings do we soar up unto God, and upon these two supports do we lean boldly, so as that no shipwrecks of temptations may drown us. The effect is this, that as often as any terror encounters us, we must bethink us of God's power, to whom it is an easy and ready matter to shake off all harms, be they never so dreadful. And when this shall be a prevailing sentiment in

our minds, it will easily overthrow whatsoever is contrary to our salvation. For what is there to be feared where the same God that shroudeth us under the shadow of his wings governeth the whole world with his back alone? holdeth Satan and all the ungodly bound in secret chains, and in short overruleth all the devices, endeavours, and practices of all men; provided at the same time we stick fast to this, namely, that his goodness is set forth to all the godly that depend upon it? *Thou shalt reward, &c.* He applies what he has spoken more closely to his purpose. For he avouches the world to be in suchwise under God's providence, that he will be a just judge. Now, if this expectation live in our minds, it will keep them collected and free from all waverings, calm all impatience, yea and bridle all unruliness, so as not to rush forward to retaliate wrongs. For to this end David cites and presents himself and all others at the judgment-seat of God, that he may confirm himself in the hope of the deliverance to come, and with a stout heart despise their tipsy forwardness, because it cannot be but that all men's doings come to account before God, who will no more cease from the duty of a judge, than he will deny himself. Whence it follows that how much soever we are subject to wrongs, or rather how much soever heathens account us but as refuse; yet doth God regard our miseries to relieve them in season, because he will not disappoint the patience of his servants. Now when the papists go about to prove by these sentences, that we attain righteousness and salvation by the deserts of our own works, we have shewn before what trifling it is. As soon as mention is made of works, they catch hold of it, as if God, esteeming only each man's merits, should render a reward of debt. But the Holy Ghost promiseth reward to works in a far other sense; namely, that men should give themselves to innocence, and not grow proud in impious confidence in them, which overturns their whole salvation root and branch. God then so judgeth of the works of the faithful, as that the price and estimation of them depends first upon the free forgiveness of sins, whereby he takes the unworthy into favour; and secondly, upon his mere bearing with them, or accepting them, which gives grace to things imperfect and filthy of themselves. For we know that no work comes into God's presence either perfect, or pure, or unstained with any infection. Whence it follows, that it is of God's mere bounteousness that they find reward. Therefore as the scripture in promising reward to the children of God, does but stir them up to the following of godliness and righteous dealing, that they may fight the more cheerfully for God, but derogates nought from the mercifulness of God

himself, the papists infer too fondly that the faithful deserve that which is rendered them. As for punishments, no doubt God layeth them justly upon the despisers of his law.

PSALM LXIII.

This Psalm contains not so much prayers as godly musings, which he set before him for his comfort in the time of his extreme troubles, griefs, and dangers. Also he intermixes the vows which he had made to God when he was in heaviness for the terrors that he encountered.

[*A Song of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.*]

2 Thou, O God, art my God ; I will seek thee early : my soul hath thirsted after thee, my flesh hath hungered after thee in a barren and thirsty land, without waters.

3 So have I beheld thee in thy sanctuary, to see thy strength and thy glory.

4 For thy loving-kindness is better than life : my lips shall praise thee.

5 So will I praise thee in my life : in thy name will I lift up my hands.

In the wilderness, &c.] There is no doubt that by the wilderness of Judah is meant Ziph, where David wandered a great while to hide himself. Now as he reports faithfully, how he was minded in the very time of his dangers, we gather that he was never so utterly cast down by his miseries, but that he sent up his prayers to heaven, or rather leaned on God's promises with an assured and steadfast faith ; which is so much the more to be noted, that we also, from whom almost every trifling temptation banishes the knowledge of God, may, in the heaviest of our sorrows, labour to godward. But David not only calls upon him, but also avouches him to be his God, so that he doubted not to cast his cares into his bosom, when notwithstanding, being destitute of all help, he in a manner pined away in a waste and parched wilderness. This faith, whereby he was persuaded that God was merciful to him and the preserver of his welfare, kindled a longing in his heart, to request with continual and earnest prayers the grace that he hoped for. When he says that *his soul thirsteth*, and *his flesh hungereth*, he alludes to the scarcity and want wherewith he was

pinched in the wilderness; as if he should say, Although being hungry and fasting he lacked all things that should sustain life, yet was God instead of meat and drink to him, so that his hunger tended that way. When he attributes thirst to his soul, and hunger to his flesh, this partition must not be taken scrupulously: for he means simply, that he longed after God both with body and soul. For although the body be moved with no appetite of itself, yet is it sufficiently known that the affections of the soul pierce even into it, and are diffused over it.

3 *So have I beheld, &c.*] He confirms that which I touched upon lately; namely, that at such time as he continued in the wilderness destitute of all things, yet he never forgot God. For there is no small weight in the particle *so*; as if he should say, Although there appear nothing in this wilderness but sorrow and dreadfulness, so that the very roughness of the place is able to darken mine eyes, yet do I occupy myself in beholding thy glory and power, even as if I were in thy sanctuary. As long as David was at liberty to come to the sanctuary he neglected not that service of the law, because he knew he had need of such helps. And now, when he is prohibited from coming there, he shews that his mind is not tied to those outward signs, because he delights himself nevertheless in the spiritual beholding of God. At the same time also he shews, by the deed itself, how well he had profited in those exercises of godliness which the Lord had commanded in his law. Gross and superstitious people seem to be ravished up into heaven with earnestness of zeal, as long as the ceremonies are before their eyes; but all their devotion vanishes away as soon as the form that they gazed upon is once out of their sight. But David, although now bereft of ceremonies, yet retains still the remembrance of them to help his aspirations and efforts to godward. Wherefore let us learn by his example, that although we happen to be bereft of all the outward symbols of God's grace, yet must we even in the midst of the lowest depths look up to God with the eyes of faith, that we turn not our back upon him as soon as the visible figures are taken from us. So must the spiritual laver, which once for all represents Christ unto us in baptism, continue fastened in our remembrance all our life long; Eph. v. 26; Tit. iii. 5. Even so must we call to mind Christ's secret communion with his members, not only at the celebration of his supper, but also at all other times. Nay, if perchance any tyrannical force bereave us of the holy supper, and the other helps of godliness, yet must we beware that the eyes of our mind turn not themselves at

any time from God. When he says *he beheld to see*, he denotes earnest heedfulness; as if he should say, My whole study and musing is, to bear in mind God's glory and power, whereof the image shines forth in the sanctuary.

4 *For thy loving-kindness, &c.*] Although I reject not the opinion of them that read this verse in one passage, yet, in my judgment, the former part of it connects better with the verse that went before. For it seems to me that David renders a cause why he was so greatly addicted to God. And first, it is to be noted, that under the word *life* are comprehended all the means whereby men maintain their estate. For as long as we think ourselves to be well fenced, it never comes into our thought to flee to God's mercy. Again; our being, if I may so term it, dazzles our eyes, that we cannot see how we subsist by the only grace of God. Forasmuch, therefore, as we almost forget God as long as we are propped up with earthly stays, David avouches here that it is better for us to lean upon God's mercy even in death itself, than to trust in the appearance of life. More coldly and insipidly do others expound it, that our life, though it be precious, is less worth than God's mercy; as if he should say that this one thing alone, that is, to stand in the favour of God, is to be preferred before all the goods in the world. But we must consider the antithesis between the safe estate that men lean upon and God's mercy, which succours those that slide, and are at the point of perishing, and which is the only remedy to supply all defaults. The refined speculations of Augustin on the plural number are not sufficiently supported. The Hebrews name life *חיים*: and because Augustin read it *lives*, he thought that according as every man gapes after goods, or is given to pleasures, or follows after delights, or covets honours, or is given over to pampering his belly, so each of them has his proper life allotted to him. And against all these vices he sets eternal life, which, according to him, is by a change of name called God's mercy, because it is given us of God's mere grace, and not purchased by desert of works. But, as I said, the prophet's meaning is more simple; namely, that although men swim in good things, and flourish in riches, and finally be guarded by all means that can procure surety to life, yet is it but as nothing, because it is better to depend upon the only mercy of God, than to be founded upon our own being, and upon all the props and pillars of the lame. Whence it follows, that although the faithful be distressed with poverty, oppressed with wrongs, languish in sickness, suffer hunger and thirst, and be vexed with many cares and sorrows, yet are they happy nevertheless, because they

cannot be but in good case, as long as they are assured of God's mercy. And again; that the faithless, although the whole world smile upon them, are notwithstanding wretched, because God is against them, and so consequently their state is cursed. Hence David gathers, that he is bound to praise God, according as the knowledge of his goodness opens our mouth. And he declares the same thing more plainly in the next verse, where he says he will praise him in his lifetime. Still there is some ambiguity in the words. For the particle *so* may denote a deliverance; as if he should say, He had just cause to praise God, inasmuch as he had felt by experience, that it is far better for us to be quickened by him, than to live to ourselves. It may also be understood of David's miserable and afflicted state; because he said just now, that the solitariness of the desert prevented him not from looking to God. Also the word *life* may be understood as well of the deliverance sent him from God, as of the whole course of life. And like as the first sense contains a more copious doctrine, so also seems it to suit better thus; *Because I remain safe and sound alive by thy benefit, I will praise thee the more cheerfully.* So also in another place; *I shall not die, but live; and shew forth the works of the Lord;* Ps. cxviii. 17. Also: *The dead shall not praise thee, O Lord, nor all they that go down into the grave: but we that live, are they that praise the Lord, &c.;* Ps. cxv. 17. In the second part of the verse, by the *lifting up of his hands*, he denotes vows and prayers; as if he should say, He would not only give thanks, but also take heart to pray, and so occupy himself continually in calling upon God. And surely, God himself, by dealing bounteously with us, not only allures us to thankfulness, but also confirms our hope for the time to come, that we should not doubt of the full accomplishment of his grace, whereof we have experienced the beginnings. Some understand *the lifting up of his hands to God*, to be the clapping of his hands. Others think it implies as much as if David should say that upon trust of God's help he will encounter his enemies fearlessly. But I have shewn you already what I like best.

6 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with lips of joyfulness.

7 Surely I will be mindful of thee upon my bed: I will think upon thee when I lie awake.

8 For thou hast been my help; and I shall rejoice under the shadow of thy wings.

9 My soul hath clung after thee : thy right hand shall hold me up.

6 *My soul shall be, &c.*] It is a confirmation of the former sentence. For David metaphorically promises himself such plentiful abundance of all good things at God's hand as may yield him matter of joy and gladness. And although he composed this Psalm in the time of ease and wealth, yet is it likely that he hoped for this fulness when he wandered as yet far from it, destitute and hungry in the wilderness. And it is a notable trial of faith when God's grace, though it be hidden, is thoroughly seen afar off. Also this example must be marked advisedly, lest we be discouraged when the wicked are fed daintily, or rather cram themselves and riot in their abundance without measure, and we in poverty sustain hunger and thirst. For David's need was such also as might have driven him to despair. But as he knew it was the peculiar office of God to satisfy the hungry souls, he hoped he should want nothing as long as he was in his favour. And because God will try our patience by many necessities in this life, let us learn to bear our wrongs patiently until the time of full satisfaction be come. Moreover, it is to be noted that under the metaphor of *marrow* and *fatness* is not meant such pampering as is seen among worldlings, who have no stay of themselves in riotous excess of filling the paunch, but overcharging themselves, are bereft of their right wits; for David stints himself in his sufferance, that he may so much the more cheerfully address himself to the publishing of God's praises.

7 *Surely I will, &c.*] It may also be read *when, or as often as I shall remember thee, I will pray to thee when I am waking*. But forasmuch as the conditional particle **ON** not only is taken for an adverb of time, but also sometimes affirms, I would not depart from the ordinary sense without cause. If you read it affirmatively, *to be mindful* and *to think upon*, shall import all one thing, and it shall be but a rehearsal of one meaning twice. But if you like better to have the particle to be conditional, the meaning will be, that as often as God's name comes to David's remembrance, he will gladly think, yea and also speak, of his benefits. And he mentions watching, or waking, because that when we be withdrawn from the sight of men, not only cares have their recourse, but also the mind doth more freely apply itself to these or those thoughts. Then follows a rendering of the cause, namely, for that he had been preserved by the help of God. Certainly such an experience must, as I have said

often heretofore, not only spur us to the setting forth of God's praises, but also to call upon his name, according as it is said in Psalm v. 8, *Upon the multitude of thy loving-kindness will I enter into thy temple.* The second part of the verse is referred unto hope; namely, that David will rejoice, or in joyfulness triumph under the shadow of God's wings, because he shall with a merry and cheerful heart rest under God's protection, no less void of fear than if he were out of all hazard.

9 *My soul hath, &c.*] Forasmuch as the word *רִבְקָה* oftentimes signifies to *lay hold of*, or to *follow after*, especially when it is construed with the preposition *אַחֲרָי*, it will agree no less to be translated thus, *My soul shall follow*, or *strive after thee.* But if the word *cleave* please any one better, yet both ways David means that his heart shall always with steady perseverance be fixed upon God. For thus imports the word *אַחֲרָי*: that although it behoved David to make a long and painful journey, and that there were many delays obstructed, yea and although God himself should go afar off, yet would not he be wearied, but follow steadfastly after him. The latter member might be taken simply of that deliverance whereof he has made mention before; as if he should say that his former standing upright and unhurt by the protection of God unto that time, is his best stay to hold him up in seeking and pursuing God hereafter. Notwithstanding, I extend it further; namely, that David warrants himself the gift of steadfastness from the Holy Ghost. For it had been too much presumption for him to have bragged that the desire of his mind should have been steadfast in pursuing or embracing God to the last, unless he had immediately added this qualification, that his heart would be steady so far forth as he should be upheld by the hand of God.

10 And they, in seeking to destroy my soul, shall go into the lowest parts of the earth.

11 They shall cast him down upon the edge of the sword: they shall be the portion of foxes.

12 But the king shall rejoice in God; and whosoever sweareth by him shall be joyful: for the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

10 *And they, in seeking, &c.*] Here David rejoices more boldly, as though he had gotten the upperhand. And although he compiled this Psalm when his affairs were settled, yet is it not to be doubted but that he hoped for

these self-same things which he sang of afterwards, even at such time as his life hung as yet by a thread. The effect is, that although his enemies be ready to fall upon his head, yet shall they shortly perish, because God shall cast them down headlong, and not only deliver them to destruction but also bring to pass that their carcases shall lie unburied. For *to be the portion of foxes*, implies as much as to be devoured and torn in pieces of wild beasts. And God doth often menace this punishment to the reprobates, that when they are slain by the sword of their enemies they shall be a prey for wolves and dogs, because he will deprive them of the honour of burial. Indeed the same thing befalls even the best of men now and then, according as we know that temporal punishments are common both to good and bad; but here is the difference, that God gathereth together the bones of his servants, even when they are scattered here and there, and layeth them up in sure keeping, so that none of them perisheth; but the scattering abroad of the reprobates' bones is a handsel of their everlasting damnation.

12 *But the king, &c.*] Because God had not only helped David individually, but also had, in his person, taken measures for the welfare of the whole church, he worthily joins here the public joy with his own; even as the welfare of the whole body depended upon the head. And his godly high-mindedness is to be noted, that being beset with many deaths, yet he doubts not to call himself king; because although he enjoyed not the kingdom that was promised him, yet he maintained the possession of it by faith. And in saying that he shall rejoice in God, he not only avouches that he will be thankful, but also extols God's gracious goodness, because it extends to the preservation of all the godly. For we have told you that the state of the elect people could not at that time be otherwise preserved than by the continuance and prosperity of David's reign, because God's will was to teach us, under that figure, that all our happiness and glory is founded upon Christ. By those *that swear in the name of God*, he denotes figuratively all the godly worshippers of him. For as it is a species of God's service to make him our witness and judge, oftentimes the profession of godliness is denoted by *swearing*. Not that God accounteth them all for his servants, that have his holy name in their mouth, considering that many offer him grievous reproach by forswearing themselves wickedly, and others either dishonour or diminish his majesty by light and fond oaths, and the hypocrites perversely abuse his name. But the prophet David denotes none other here than such as swear by God's name soberly and reverently, and whose hearts are answer-

able to their tongues; which appears the better also by that which is contrasted with it. For to those that swear by the name of God, he opposes *such as speak lies*. By which saying he touches not only forsworn and guileful persons, but also such as dishonour the name of God with their impious deceits.

PSALM LXIV.

This Psalm contains a complaint mingled with prayer. For that David may the more incline God to mercy, he complains as well of his enemies' wrongful cruelty, as of their treasons, and perverse practices. And in the end, turning his eyes unto God, he congratulates himself on a happy issue of his case.

[To the chief chanter. A Psalm of David.]

2 Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer : keep my life from the fear of mine enemy.

3 Hide me from the conspiracy of the malicious, and from the rout of them that work wickedness.

4 For they have whetted their tongue like a sword, and have shot forth their arrow, even bitter talk.

5 To shoot privily at the upright person : suddenly will they shoot, and not fear.

6 They settle themselves unto mischief : they consult of hiding their snares ; they say, Who shall see them ?

7 They have searched out iniquities ; they have accomplished the search that they sought out : even every man his secret thoughts, and the depth of his heart.

2 *Hear my voice, O God, &c.*] He protests that he prays earnestly and with a fervent affection, and therewith shews his necessity : his loud praying is a sign of his earnestness and vehemence. Anon, he comes down to the distressing difficulties he was driven to, recording the terrors of death that were forced upon him by his enemies, and afterwards other circumstances, whereby to win himself favour : for by calling upon God to preserve his life, he intimates that he was in hazard of it. In the second verse he says, he has to encounter many, and therefore that he is unable to bear the brunt of them, except God succour him. Still the ambiguity

of the words yields a twofold meaning: for the word סוד, which signifies secret, is taken by some for secret machinations; and by others, for a company sitting in council. I have put the Latin word *conspiracy*, which also is of doubtful signification, and may be taken as well for a company that consult about mischief, as for the mischief itself which they have devised. In the second place is added the word רגשת, which sometimes signifies a noise, or crying out, and sometimes a company of men: and it is derived from the root רגש, which signifies to make an uproar. If any man like to take סוד for secret treachery, then will רגשת signify a forcible assault. And so David would require to be defended as well from the covert malice of his enemies, as from their open force and violence, when having consulted how they may do harm, they spring forward to put their devices in execution. Notwithstanding, the former meaning is both more simple and more natural; namely, that David, that he may the more provoke God to be merciful to him, complains of the multitude of his enemies. Meanwhile David avouches, that although he be oppressed with never so great a multitude, yet the protection, which he sues for from heaven suffices him. Also he commends his cause by the malice and wickedness of his enemies: for the more wrongfully, or the more cruelly they deal with us, the more certainly may we assure ourselves that God will be merciful to us.

4 *For they have whetted their tongue like a sword, &c.]* Though his enemies in their fury sought his life, yet does he chiefly find fault with their virulence. And it is likely that he speaks of the false reports and slanders, wherewith he knew himself to be charged, and to be brought in hatred of the whole realm without cause. Therefore, he likens their tongues to swords, and their bitter and venomous talk to arrows. Against these he avouches his own innocence, saying that they shoot at an upright and guiltless person. The trust, therefore, wherewith he encouraged himself to obtain, is this; that knowing himself guilty of no offence, he was nevertheless assaulted unworthily and treacherously by wicked and flagitious persons. Moreover, in saying that they shoot privily and in the dark, and that they brandish their weapons suddenly, he means that they exceed in manifold policy, and that they not only earnestly set to do mischief, but also are shrewd and politic; so that they thrust a man unawares to the heart, before he can suspect that any evil is at hand. Now, when we hear that David, who had so holily and purely followed righteousness, was nevertheless subject to malignant accusations, let us not marvel if at any

time God exercise us with the like kind of temptation, who are far short of David's uprightness. For this will be our singular comfort, even to flee to God, that he may take upon him the maintenance of our good cause. He adds another circumstance, namely, that without shame or fear *they shoot arrows dipped in poison out of their mouth*. But such a carelessness is a sign of desperate presumption, when the wicked being a hundred times caught in their iniquity, nevertheless go on obstinately, so that neither any fear of God, nor shame of the world, can withhold them from running ahead with gladiatorial and desperate fury.

6 *They settle themselves, &c.*] Now he complains of the wilfulness and wicked conspiracies of his enemies. Lastly, he adds their presumption, by which they embolden themselves to adventure upon anything. And no doubt David's weakness gave them the more courage to vex the miserable and fugitive soul the more frowardly, whom they saw destitute of all succour. After he has said that they are incurable, and such as there is no hope of winning to any gentleness; he adds, that they confer to and fro among themselves, how they may destroy him by treason. At length follows their fierceness, because they thought their wiles to be invisible. For we know how insolently the wicked trample upon the simple, upon trust of their own craftiness, because they think they have a hundred devices always at their fingers' ends, to cloak the enormity of their wicked dealings. One may conveniently refer the word *לְמִן*, as well to the workmasters of mischief themselves, as to their snares and treacheries. I had rather understand it however of themselves, forasmuch as being blinded with pride, they run boldly and recklessly whithersoever their lust leads them, because no fear of God, nor shame of the world restrains them: in the next verse he lashes their craftiness yet more severely. And therefore he says, they have searched out all the ways of mischief, so that they have omitted nothing that was requisite for the strictest search. By the term of *searching*, he understands the secret arts of working mischief. And he adds that the depths of their malice are profound: for by *their deep heart*, and by *their inward or secret parts*, he means the coverts within which the wicked coil themselves. Some take the word *שֵׁן* indefinitely in thiswise; Mine enemies gather to themselves whatsoever policy and subtlety is to be found among men. But as touching the effect of the matter, it imports little, because it is enough to bear in mind, that David's enemies practised his destruction, not only by open force, but also by secret malice; and that they were as quicksighted as possible to

delve up unlooked for means of mischief, as it were out of the depths of darkness.

8 And God shall shoot an arrow at them; suddenly shall their strokes light upon them.

9 And they shall make their own tongue dash upon them: and whosoever seeth them shall flee away.

10 And all men shall see it, and declare the work of God: and they shall understand what he hath wrought.

11 The righteous shall rejoice in the Lord, and trust in him; and all that are upright of heart shall glory in him.

8 *And God shall, &c.*] Now David rises up to rejoicing, assuring himself that his desires shall not be in vain, but rather that God hath already heard them. And although God's vengeance were not yet to be seen with eyes, yet does David avouch that it shall be sudden. Wherein he alleges no ordinary trial of his faith, that though he see the ungodly hardened by reason of their flowing prosperity, and warrant themselves that they shall never be punished because God winketh and holdeth his peace, yet he faints not for weariness, but can find in his heart to tarry till God, after long-sufferance, appear suddenly as a judge, according as he is wont to shew himself ere he be looked for, and to take the ungodly in their iniquity, when, thinking themselves to have escaped, they wanton without measure. Therefore in our daily misfortunes let us always bear in mind this comfort, that God advisedly delayeth the punishment which he purposeth to lay upon the ungodly, that he may thunder the more fiercely upon them; and that when they shall say all is peace and quiet, then he may overwhelm them with sudden destruction: Jer. viii. 11.

9 *And they shall make, &c.*] He proceeds with the same sentiment; namely, that whatsoever poison they brew in their consultations, and spit out with their tongues, it shall turn in the end to their own bane. The same expresses he elsewhere, in another form of speech; *They shall be caught in their own snares, and fall into the pit which they have made themselves*: Psalm lvii. 7. For it is a just retribution that God should turn upon their own heads whatsoever they direct against the good and simple. Now, although God display very many examples of this judgment daily

before our eyes, yet is it a matter very hard for us to believe. Wherefore so much the more must we give ourselves to think upon this point; namely, that God keeps watch for us, to turn to their own destruction whatsoever flights the wicked forge against us, as if they had sought for such a reward studiously. In the end of the verse he gives us to understand that the kind of vengeance shall be notable; because, *whosoever are the beholders of it, shall flee away, or tremble*. For since God's judgments flit past the darkling eyes of men, the marks had need be signal that compel the world to be afraid and amazed.

10 *And all men shall see it, &c.*] He unfolds more completely the fruit that shall come of God's judgment; namely, that such as heretofore made none account of God's providence, being awakened with the strange and unwonted sight, shall begin to consider better what was before unknown to them, so that one of them shall tell another of it. For David restrains not the knowledge of this notable grace to a few, but he says it shall be renowned everywhere, and therefore he says *all men*. Moreover, as the word שכל, in the conjugation Niphal, is taken as well neutrally as actively, they that will have it to be a verb neuter elicit this sense: Men shall universally be compelled to acknowledge this to be the work of God, and when they understand it they shall also publish it abroad. But as David is wont commonly to repeat one thing twice, the transitive signification will not be inapplicable. In the last verse is described a yet more plenteous fruit; namely, that this deliverance shall minister matter of joyfulness, hope, and holy glorying, to all the godly; that is, because they shall gather therefrom that God will be the same to them that he shewed himself towards his servant David. And it is to be noted that those who a little before were called righteous, are now called *the upright of heart*, that we should know that God alloweth no righteousness but that which proceeds from the inward purity of the heart, of which matter I have treated more at large elsewhere.

PSALM LXV.

This Psalm is composed of prayer and thanksgiving intermixed. And although there is inserted a prophecy of a participation of faith by the Gentiles, yet is God's fatherly loving-kindness towards his church described with special commendations, and the blessings that follow it. And God is besought specially to continue the same bountifulness which the Jews had had experience of. Finally, there are declared two points of God's favour; both that he defended the land mightily, and also enriched it with abundance of all good things.

[To the chief chanter. A Psalm or Song of David.]

2 For thee, O God, awaiteth praise in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed.

3 *Thou art* he that heareth men's prayers: unto thee shall all flesh come.

4 Words of wickedness have prevailed against me; thou shalt cleanse our misdeeds.

2 *For thee, O God, &c.*] Word for word it is, *to thee doth praise keep silence*. But the word רוֹמִיָה is taken metaphorically to be still, and so consequently to *await*. Now the meaning comes to this, that God is so beneficent towards his servants that he ministereth daily to them new matter of praise. For although his bounteousness diffuse itself over the whole world, yet he vouchsafes a peculiar favour to his church. To this is added, that all others, howsoever they are replenished with his benefits, yet perceive not whence they come, and so swallow up and consume in silence whatsoever good things God bestoweth upon them. But the prophet was minded to declare expressly that God's goodness shineth forth in suchwise in his church, that he is worthily praised there. To the same purpose pertains the other member, where he treats of performing the vow. For he so promises thankfulness in the name of the people, as that notwithstanding, he denotes by the latter, that there shall always be new occasion of testifying and setting forth God's goodness, because he ceases not to pursue his church with his continual favour. Also the next verse is connected with this, where God is said to hear the prayers of his servants. Therefore he assigns the cause of paying the vow, to be that God never disappointeth his servants when they call upon him, but favourably granteth

their requests; and so what is put in the second place is notwithstanding first in order. But this title wherewith David adorns God, contains a very profitable doctrine; namely, that our prayers shall never be in vain, because if God should reject them, he would in a manner abandon his own nature. For David recites not what was done at some one time, but he clothes God with an unchangeable robe; as if he should say, it were no more possible that God should be deaf to the prayers of his servants, than to deny himself. Now if it be thoroughly engraven on our hearts, that it is proper to God, and inseparable from him, to hear the prayers of his servants; we shall never be bereft of boldness to pray. Furthermore, seeing he never wanteth ability to help, doubtless we may hope for joyful and prosperous success. And no less worthy of marking is that which ensues; namely, that therefore *all flesh shall come unto God*. For as no man durst press into God's presence unless he were persuaded that he would be entreated; so when he meeteth them of his own accord, and assureth them that they call not upon him in vain, the gate is set open for all men to flock to him eagerly. For although hypocrites and worldlings fling their prayers into the air when necessity pinches them; yet is it no true approaching to God when they bring not the certainty of faith conceived upon God's word, but hang upon the expectation of a casual issue. Therefore that the way of praying aright may be opened, God's promises must needs shine before us; because when they are taken away, we are prohibited from the presence of God; as Paul, Eph. iii. 12, appoints this order, that whosoever desires to approach to God must be endued with faith through Christ to encourage him to boldness. Hence we gather that there is no rule of praying among the papists, where they pray to God always with wavering and doubtful minds. But inestimable evermore is this privilege which we obtain by the Gospel, that we have free access set open for us to God. And by naming all flesh generally, the prophet declares briefly that what at that time was peculiar to the Jews, should in time to come be common to all nations. And so it is a prophecy concerning Christ's kingdom then to come.

4 *Words of wickedness, &c.*] He complains not that the people are charged with false accusations, but he confesses simply that the wickedness of the Jews is the hindrance that God sheweth not himself gentle and favourable to them, according to his wont. And this place agrees with that of Isaiah, lix. 1, *the ear of the Lord is not so dulled that he cannot hear*; but our iniquities put a distance betwixt us

and him. To be brief, that God who is wont to help his servants freely, or rather who allureth them gently and courteously to him, withdraweth his hand for a time, David lays the blame of this inconvenience upon the sins of himself and the people. For in the first place he acknowledges his own guiltiness, according as Daniel does, ix. 5, and forthwith joins the whole people in fellowship with him. And the prophet has put in this sentence, not to prohibit himself and others from boldness of praying, but rather to get over the obstacle that would keep off all mortal men from access to God; except they believed that even the unworthy are heard also. And it is likely that the faithful were at that time stricken with some present sign of God's wrath, because David wrestles against this temptation. But we see he had a remedy at hand; for on the other hand, he takes it to be the peculiar charge of God, to forgive sins and to cleanse them. So also must this verse be united with the former, and be expounded adversatively in thiswise: Although our sins, as they deserve repulse, cast us far out of thy presence; yet as thou shewest thyself ready to be reconciled, they shall not interrupt the course of our prayers. Now we are taught by this passage that God cannot otherwise be entreated by us, than by suing humbly for pardon of our sins. And by the way, it is beyond all doubt that the free forgiveness of sins is the thing that makes God favourable to us. Now if he withdraw his favour for awhile, yea, and turn his back upon us, yet must we, after the example of David, spring forth to the hope of reconciliation. When in the singular number he confesses himself alone to be overwhelmed with sins, the reason may be this; that as a king, he represented the whole realm; or else that in this form of teaching, as Daniel did, he exhorts each person severally to examine himself, so that each may bring the confession of his own guilt. For we know that hypocrites include themselves for fashion sake in the common beadroll, thereby to hide their sins. But David, not from feigned modesty only, but of earnest intent, beginning at himself, accuses all men as guilty before God.

5 Blessed is he whom thou choosest, and makest near unto thee; he shall dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goods of thy house, even of the sanctuary of thy palace.

6 Terrible things shalt thou answer us in thy righteousness, O God of our welfare; thou that art the

hope of all the ends of the earth, and of the farness of the sea.

7 That stablisheth the mountains with his power, and is girded about with strength.

8 That appeaseth the noise of the seas, and the noise of the waves of them, and the uproars of the people.

9 And they that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth shall be afraid at thy signs : thou shalt make the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.

5 *Blessed is he whom thou, &c.*] Because he had just now confessed that the people had by their own sins divorced themselves from God, and therefore were unworthy to be heard, now he flees into the sanctuary of God's free favour, under which is included forgiveness of sins. And so he confirms what he had said of the cleansing of sins, shewing what is the cause that makes God favourable to miserable sinners ; namely, that he hath freely embraced them with his fatherly love, without any desert of theirs. For the forgiveness which he bestoweth daily upon us, depends upon adoption, like as also our prayers are grounded upon the same. For upon what right durst the sinner press into God's presence to seek reconciliation, except he were persuaded that God is his father ? Notwithstanding, here he extends not God's grace to the Gentiles as he did a little before, but speaks according to the state of the age that he himself lived in. For at that time God accounted the Jews only to be his flock, and admitted them alone into his sanctuary. But now, because he hath taken away the difference, and called the Gentiles as well as them, it is lawful for all men to come familiarly to him. For Christ is our peace, who hath joined those that were near and those that were afar off together, Eph. ii. 14. Now we perceive to what David's purpose tends. For as remission of sins is promised to the Church and the elect, he cries out that they are blessed whom God receiveth into his flock, to enjoy this incomparable privilege. Moreover he teaches that the election was not at that time common to all men, extolling the Jews in that prerogative, because God had preferred them before all other nations. For if men could prevent God's grace, then would not the election or choice, whereof the power and right is attributed to him, remain in his hand. But there was no other respect wherein the Jews were better than other men, saving that

God vouchsafed his peculiar favour to them. And now, although the wall be broken down so that God calleth the Gentiles also, Eph. ii. 14, yet is it certain, that all are not called alike, and experience disproves the ignorance of those, who prate that God's grace is common to all men without choice. For what cause can a man imagine why God calleth not all men to him at once, but that his free election discerns the one from the other? Indeed faith and prayer are the means to get us God's favour, but the wellspring of it must be sought for without ourselves. Blessed are we truly by trusting in God, and by embracing his promises; blessed are we, I say, when upon confidence of Christ the mediator, we assure ourselves that God is our father, and direct our prayers to him. But how came we by faith and prayer, but because grace has allied us to him, who were strangers to him by nature. Our nearness then comes of this, that God hath vouchsafed to stretch out his hand to us even unto hell, and not that we prevented him of our own accord. Nay rather, to speak properly, after he hath chosen us, he testifieth his love towards us by calling us. And although God had gathered apart the seed of Abraham as a peculiar possession to himself, so that circumcision gave them a place in his temple, yet is it not to be doubted, but that David puts some difference, even between Jew and Jew. For neither had God called them all to him effectually, neither had all of them right to the place which they held in the temple. Indeed the prophet alludes to the outward sanctuary, in saying that the Jews are chosen to approach to God. But we must bear in mind what we have seen in Psalm xv. and xxiv. 3, that they were not all lawful citizens of the church, who trod the pavement of the temple, because what is chiefly required is integrity of heart and cleanness of hands. Wherefore understand that they are near to God, who not only in outward appearance have a place in the church, but appear in God's presence with faith unfeigned. Furthermore, lest any man might dream that God's sheep wander continually, and are never gathered into the fold, to election here is added calling. For by this effect does God's free adoption shew itself; namely, when we come to his sanctuary by the guiding of his Spirit. The prophet commends the fruit of blessedness in saying that the faithful are satisfied with the plenteousness of the temple. For although the hypocrites come thither also, yet return they home empty and fasting as concerning the fruition of spiritual goods. And the changing of the person is to be noted, where David gathers himself into the number of the faithful. For he sets forth in himself the proof of the fulness of which

he speaks. Furthermore, understand that the faithful are satisfied, not at one instant, but by degrees, for although God distil the gifts of his Spirit into them, yet he enricheth them so far forth as is profitable for them, until he bring them to full perfection. True is that saying of Psalm ciii. 5, *that our mouth is satisfied with God's bounteousness*. But that is to be noted also which is said in another place, *Open thy mouth and I will fill it*, Psalm lxxxi. 11. But our own narrowness is a hindrance unto us, that God cannot replenish us with so great abundance of good things; but according as he seeth us straitened, so tempereth he his liberality according to our capacity. By terming them the goods of the sanctuary, he commends the outward helps that lead us to the fruition of the heavenly goods. For although God could in old time have reached his hand to his servants out of heaven, yet was it his will to satisfy the faithful souls by the doctrine of the law, by the sacrifices and other ceremonies, and by the outward helps of religion, according also as at this day he useth the like helps towards us. And although it be not meet to stop short in them, yet is it not lawful to neglect them.

6 *Terrible things, &c.*] He confirms by another manner of speaking, that it was not for nought that he had called them blessed, to whom God had opened his temple, that they might be fed in his house. And he says that God will answer his people in miracles or dreadful signs; as if he should say, Lord, thou wilt hear us always, so that, by thy wonderful deliverances, thy power may be shewed abroad in like manner as in old time when our fathers came out of Egypt. For God hath always preserved his church, not by common and ordinary means, but by his terrible power. And this was profitable to be known, that in cases of utter extremity, God's children should nevertheless not cease to hope well. Moreover, when he has allotted the salvation of God to the Jews, he adds at the same time that he is the hope of all the ends of the earth, even to the uttermost borders of the world. Whence it follows that God's grace is extended to the Gentiles also.

7 *That stablisheth the mountains, &c.*] He takes occasion to touch upon the power of God which is seen in the whole frame of the world. For in that age it was a new thing, to make the Gentiles partners of the hope of the Jews. And therefore to take away the strangeness of the thing, David avouches opportunely, that God's might is apparent in all parts of the world. And he names the mountains rather than the plains, because God's power appeareth more rare in that immeasurable heaping of the earth and in those high

rocks. In the next verse the interpreters agree not. For in the first words some supply a mark of similitude, in this sense; that God appeaseth the uproars that are raised by the presumption of men, like as he stilleth all the noises of the sea. Others will have it to be a metaphorical expression, which David should afterwards express without figure. But I judge that David spake more simply, and that in the first member he brings a proof of God's power in the sea, and in the other member a proof thereof in men; as if he should say, God by stilling the waves and storms of the sea, sheweth with what great might he is endued. And the same proof sheweth he also in men, by appeasing the uproars which they have raised.

9 *And they that dwell, &c.*] I doubt not but that by the *signs of God* he means his notable works, and such as are worthy to be spoken of, in which he hath engraven tokens of his glory. There is indeed nothing so small or despicable in heaven or earth which represents not God's glory unto us, but this name is given to miracles by way of excellence, because God's majesty shineth forth more brightly in them. The effect is, that God's graces towards his church shall be so notable, that they shall compel even the barbarous nations, and such as are furthest off, to reverence them and wonder at them. The latter member is taken by some after thiswise; that when the sun rises in the morning, men are refreshed with the light thereof; and likewise also when the moon and the stars shine in the night, the sadness which men would else conceive from the darkness is assuaged. By this means the word *for* were to be supplied, and that member were to be read in thiswise; *Thou shalt make them rejoice for the outgoings of the morning and the evening*; as if the prophet had said, Lord, thou cheerest men as well in the mornings as the evenings, by the rising of the sun, the moon, and the stars. But as the words, as they sound of themselves, contain an apt and profitable sense, I like not to fetch anything from elsewhere to fill up the sentence. David had said that fear should come upon the uttermost coasts of the earth by reason of God's miracles, and now he declares the same of gladness; as if he should say, that even from the sun rising to his going down, God should not only become dreadful, but also be the author of joy and gladness.

10 Thou hast visited the earth, and watered it; thou hast enriched it abundantly: the river of God is full of waters; thou shalt prepare their corn, for to that end thou dost ordain it.

11 Thou makest her furrows drunk, thou makest rain to come down into her furrows; thou waterest her with showers; thou blessest her buds.

12 Thou crownest the year with thy bountifulness; and thy paths shall drop fatness.

13 They drop upon the habitations of the wilderness; and the hills shall be girded about with gladness.

14 The pastures are covered with cattle, and the valleys are covered with corn: they shout for joy, yea and sing.

10 *Thou hast visited, &c.*] This verb *visited* and the rest of the verbs that follow, denote a continued act; and therefore they may conveniently be translated in the present tense. In the second verb the interpreters vary, for some derive it from שָׁקַח, which signifies *to miss, to want, to desire, or to long*; and others derive it from שָׁקַח, which signifies *to give drink*. The first resolve it thus; Lord, after that thou hast made the earth to thirst through long heat and drought, at length thou visitest it. Nevertheless, this other interpretation will flow better; namely, *Thou, O God, visitest the earth, by watering it*. And thus the text is more coherent; for immediately after follows, *Thou enrichest it abundantly*, which appears to be added to amplify the matter. Still it may be doubted whether he means only Judah or the whole earth. As for me, although I confess that all these things are truly predicated of the whole world, yet I think that David speaks peculiarly of Judah, according as he has hitherto commended God's peculiar graces towards his church. And with this opinion agrees that which he adds immediately to it, that *God's brook, or river, is full of waters*; for the interpretation of some, that *God's river* signifies a great and large river, is harsh and constrained; and he would rather have said *rivers* in the plural number. In my judgment he sets the small and slender brook of Silo, against the natural streams that enrich the countries where they run, alluding to that place of Moses, Deut. xi. 10; *The land which the Lord thy God will give thee, shall not be like Egypt which the overflowing of Nilus makes fruitful; but that land looks for rain from heaven*. Or else perhaps by a metaphor he terms the rain itself *God's river*. Surely this must be restrained to Judah, like as also by *the pastures or habitations of the wilderness*, is meant the dry and rougher part of the realm, which the scripture calls *the hill country*. Never-

theless, although here is commended that bounty of God which was more familiarly known to his elect people, yet is it our duty wheresoever we dwell to acknowledge the riches of God's goodness in the increase and fertility of the earth; for it generates not the manifold abundance of good things of its own power, but so far forth as God hath made it fit to foster men. Wisely therefore and beautifully does David say, that corn is prepared for men, because the Lord hath ordained the earth to that purpose. And his meaning is, that this abundance issues out of the earth, because God, like an excellent householder, minding to provide for men, hath so created it, that it should yield them food and sustenance.

11 *Thou makest her, &c.*] Some resolve these words into the mood of wishing, so that it should be a prayer. But I have no doubt that David continues his thanksgiving, because God by moistening and soaking the earth with rain, giveth it ability to yield fruit. By which words he signifies, that the whole order of nature is a witness of God's fatherly love towards us, inasmuch as he vouchsafeth to have a care of our daily sustenance. And he inculcates this grace of God with many words, which the greater part of the world obscure profanely and wickedly; for the more quick-sighted each man is in marking the natural means, so much the more he continues grovelling in them, so that he can in nowise mount up to God. Truly philosophy, the more narrowly it searches out the secrets of God, ought to bring us so much the more nearly to him; but our own corruptness and unthankfulness will not give us leave. But because all the most acute of men, seeking the original of the rain in the air and elements, turn aside their thoughts from God, it was the more need that we should be awakened.

12 *Thou crownest the year, &c.*] Others translate it, *Thou crownest the year of thy bountifulness*; as if David should say, that fruitful years excel in singular beauty, as though God adorned them with a crown; in like manner as if the harvest be more plentiful than ordinary, and there be a copious vintage, the same shall be a crown of the year. And truly, I confess that God's blessing shineth not alike every year; but admit that some are better than others; yet is none utterly destitute of his adorning. And so to my seeming the simple sense is, that God's bountifulness is apparent throughout each circling year. Afterwards he explains his own meaning where he says that *God's paths drop fatness*, meaning metaphorically thereby the clouds, which he terms so, because God rideth on them, according as it is said in Psalm iv. 3. Therefore, as the abundance

of the earth comes from juice or moisture, moisture from rain, and rain from the clouds; it is elegantly said by him that the clouds drop fatness, and that they are God's paths or chariots; as if he should say, Which way soever God journeyeth, there floweth plenty and abundance of fruits at his feet. In the next verse he amplifies this grace, that the same fatness diffuses itself even into the uninhabited countries. For by wildernesses he means not the dry deserts wherein there grows nothing; but the places that are less peopled, wherein there dwells not so great a crowd of men; but yet God's blessing is reflected more conspicuously, when he droppeth down fatness upon the tops of the mountains. Afterwards, he comes down to the valleys and plains, that he may shew that there is no part of the earth void of God's riches, because his bounty suffices to enrich all the world. Also there is added a commendation in respect of the very variety, for that the valleys and low grounds are clad as well with sheep as with corn. He improperly attributes gladness to lifeless things; like as also the fields are said to laugh, when they cheer men's hearts with their goodliness. But it is a marvellous thing, that to rejoicing he joins also singing, putting in the particle *וְשָׂא*, which we know to be emphatical; when notwithstanding it is a less thing to sing than to shout for joy. But I refer it to the continuing of the joy, that he says, *yea, and they shall sing*, that we may know it shall not be one year's joy, but a continual recurrence of joy. Besides this, we know how frequent it is among the Hebrews to transpose the order of words.

PSALM LXVI.

Although it may be that the prophet sets forth some one deliverance chiefly, under the person of the church, yet he comprehends the manifold graces wherewith God ceased not to ply his chosen people. And like as he avouches that they were preserved by God, when they were in misery, and brought low, so he ministers unto them matter of comfort and patience, in saying that they were tried as silver, when they were subject to the tyranny of their enemies. In the end he seems to speak of himself alone, alleging it for a proof of his own integrity, that he was heard of God, who rejects the ungodly and wicked.

[To the chief chanter. A Song or Psalm. 'Rejoice to godward all the earth.']

2 Sing the glory of his name; make glory his praise.

3 Say unto God, How dreadful art thou in thy works ! in the multitude of thy strength shall thine enemies lie unto thee.

4 All the earth shall worship thee, and sing unto thee ; they shall sing unto thy name. Selah.

Rejoice to godward, &c.] It is a general preface, which will be followed soon by the special subjects. And because he directs his words to the whole world, I doubt not but it is a prophecy of the amplitude of God's kingdom to come, which was seen at length at the coming of Christ. In the second verse he confirms the same thing with greater vehemence, that he may the more effectually stir up such to praise God as otherwise would be slothful and tardy. What it is to *sing the praise of God's name* is no obscure matter ; that is to say, to extol his holy name according to the desert and worthiness thereof, so that he may obtain his rightful and substantial glory. In the second member there is some doubt. For some, thinking one thing to be repeated in divers words, translate it, *set down the glory of his praise*. But I rather subscribe to others, who translate it, *make glory his praise*. By the way, it pleases me not that they expound it, that men must not glory in anything else than in the praises of God. It is more correctly and more simply said, *to extol God's praise mightily, that it may be glorious*. For the prophet is not contented with ordinary commendation of God's benefits, but will have them set forth gloriously according to their amplitude.

3 *Say unto God, &c.*] Now he supplies the ground upon which he would have God praised. And because many are wont to talk coldly before others of God's praises, that the prophet may move the senses of the faithful more effectually, and awaken them out of their sleep, he bids them direct their discourse unto God. For when a man speaks to him without witnesses or umpires, seeing that there is no place for counterfeiting, he utters earnestly that which he has well bethought him of in his heart before. For nothing drives us more effectually to awe of God, than when we cite ourselves before his face. And that he may the more enkindle this affection, he says that *God's enemies lie unto him by reason of the multitude of his strength*. For if the hard and stiffnecked, who would fain slip their necks out of his yoke, are compelled, whether they will or not, to humble themselves before him, what must the faithful do, whom he subdueth not to him by fear, but allureth unto him by gentle means ? For such a tacit comparison is there between the

willing service which the faithful perform, being allured with the sweetness of his grace, and the slavish and constrained subjection to which the unbelievers are dragged by force. And indeed the word *lie* signifies not to come to submission with cheerful obedience and willingly, but because necessity enforces, according as we have said in Ps. xviii. 45. For whereas some expound it, At length his enemies shall perceive themselves to have been deceived with guileful hope; and others, They shall deny themselves to have attempted any enmity against thee; it is too far from the words and meaning of the prophet. And although hypocrites lie unto God many ways, yet in this place the prophet meant nothing but that God's power is dreadful even to his enemies, so that it subdues them against their will.

4 *All the earth shall, &c.*] It is not against reason that the prophet stands so much upon the handling of this point. For though all tongues are too feeble for this argument, yet we see how niggardly and envious men are, so that they scarce besprinkle with a slender and spiritless praise that God, to set forth whose glory they ought to strain every nerve, and enforce themselves to the uttermost. And again the prophet foretells, that although the Jews alone worshipped God then in their corner, yet should all the Gentiles come under his dominion. Neither says he now as he said lately, that such should come under his yoke as could find in their hearts to withstand it if they might; but he speaks of true and unfeigned worship. *They shall sing to thee; they shall sing unto thy name.* For this sacrifice of praise is the chief sacrifice, according as it is written in Ps. l. 14, 23; yea, and it is also the true witness of good religion.

5 Come and see ye the works of God; terrible in work upon the sons of men.

6 He turned the sea into dry land: they passed on foot through the river: there we rejoiced in him.

7 He ruleth the world in his own strength: his eyes are watching over the heathen: the rebels shall not exalt themselves. *Selah.*

8 Ye people, bless our God; and sound ye forth the voice of his praise;

9 Which hath set our souls into life, and hath not given over our feet unto falling.

5 *Come, and see, &c.*] Here he glances at the sloth of nearly all men, through whose default God is defrauded

of his due praises. For how comes it to pass that the greater part of the world pass over God's works with sealed eyes, but because scarce one in a hundred applies his mind to the consideration of them? We have need of spurs, therefore, to goad forward the torpid. A passage, similar for the most part, we have had in Psalm xli. 9, from whence you may fetch the exposition of this place. The effect is this; because the prophet sees men either occupied in vain business, or lost in perverse and aimless pursuits, he exhorts them to prepare themselves to the viewing of God's works, and in exhorting them he at the same time chides the slow and lazy. Also, in saying *See ye*, he gives them to understand that they are wilfully blind in a manifest case. For if God's works were not open to be seen, it were in vain for him to bid them look upon them. Again, he sets down the special kinds of God's works, to the beholding whereof he will have all men to apply themselves; namely, the order which he useth in governing mankind. For this knowledge, by experience, it is that moves men most. Therefore Paul, Acts xvii. 27, after he had treated of God's power in general, restrains his discourse to this point, and bids every man descend into himself, because he shall see God present there. I interpret this member, *That God is wonderful in work over the sons of men*, thus: not that his majesty towers above men, but that his providence is most wonderful in defending and preserving their estate, according also as we have said in Psalm xl. 6. Therefore, although men look no further than themselves, yet shall they find cause enough to stand in awe and fear of him. At length the prophet passes from the preservation of all mankind to his special care of the church, reciting the deliverance of the chosen people. In which member there is the figure synecdoche. For no doubt he briefly puts the faithful in mind of God's innumerable benefits, wherewith he afterwards ratified this grace of deliverance. Which thing he signifies briefly in adding by and by, *There we rejoiced in him*. For the joy of that deliverance would not pertain to him and others that came after, save in so far as it was wrought by God as a pledge and assurance of continual love towards the whole body of the church. But as at that time he shewed himself to be the eternal saviour of those that are his, therefore out of this fountain flowed a common joy even to all the godly.

7 *He ruleth, &c.*] עולם signifies sometimes *an age*, or *the perpetuity of time*, and sometimes *the frame of the world*. And this latter sense seems to suit the context best, and is most received; namely, that God is endued with strength enough to hold all the world under his command. Whereto

also is referred the next member, *That his eyes watch over the heathen*. For although he had set up his peculiar seat in Judah under the law, yet he evermore embraced the whole world with his providence; and that singular privilege, which he had vouchsafed to the children of Abraham in respect of the covenant, prevented him not from extending his regard to the fostering and sustaining all the other nations. He establishes it that God hath a care of the heathen, because that even there also he taketh vengeance of the wicked and reprobates. And so the prophet proves by the effect, that God neglecteth no part of mankind, inasmuch as he casteth the wicked headlong down. For although many things are jumbled together in the world, yet doth he never suffer his judgments to lie so obscured but that he setteth forth some tokens of them, and those sufficiently luminous for keen-eyed and heedful beholders.

8 *Ye people, bless, &c.*] Although he exhort all people in common to the praising of God, yet he means some special help of God, whereby the welfare of the church was restored. And so he seems to intimate that the Gentiles should in time to come be partakers of that grace, whereof God gave his chosen people a taste at the time. By the way, he gives us to understand that it was a signal and memorable deliverance, the renown whereof he would have everywhere echoed. Now, though he avouch that the Jews were restored to life, by which manner of speaking he shews that it was not after any ordinary manner that they were succoured, yet he shews soon after that they were rather preserved from some danger than restored from some great mischance after it had happened. For, as he says that *their feet were kept from falling*, it follows that they fell not, but were succoured in time, so that they stood firm. Yet does not the prophet therefore embrace God's gracious goodness, because he prevented the mischief; but he confesses that they were given to life because they were preserved in safety by the benefit of God.

10 For thou hast proved us, O God: thou hast tried us, like as silver is tried.

11 Thou hast led us into the snare: thou hast put a straitening upon our loins.

12 Thou hast made man to ride upon our heads: we have come into fire and water, and thou hast led us out into the plain ground.

10 *For thou hast proved us, &c.*] This might be read in

the way of concession, by putting in the particle *although*. And so the prophet would amplify God's grace because he had delivered the people out of most grievous miseries. Which, although I willingly admit, yet I think the prophet had at the same time an eye to another end also; namely, to ease the sorrow of the godly with a most excellent comfort, which is to be gathered from his words. For nothing is more for our behoof than to believe that we are afflicted by the hand of God, as often as adversity pinches us; and that for none other intent than for the preservation of our welfare. Hereto pertain the proving and the trial which the prophet speaks of. And although God try his servants after the manner that silver is tried, to purge away their vices, as if he should melt away their dross in the fire, yet at the same time he means that there was had a trial of their patience also. And by the similitude of silver he seems to express that they were tried to the quick, like as silver is cast into the fire more than once. For although the faithful thank God that they were only tried with afflictions, and not utterly consumed, yet the variety and grievousness of their miseries is clearly expressed, not only in this word, but also in the whole passage, where they say they were driven into snares, brought into utter distress, men were set to ride upon their heads, and, finally, that they had passed through shipwreck and fire. And when they say that *a straitening, or chain, was put upon their loins*, they aggravate that which they had spoken before of a snare. For the meaning is, not only that they were caught in the nets, but also that they were tied short with a hard chain, that could not be undone. Also by the word *ride* they mean that tyrants bear lordly and disdainful dominion over them, and abused them in a manner as brute beasts. No doubt by *fire* and *water* are meant manifold miseries. And the sense is, that there was no kind of affliction wherewith God exercised not his church. For like as these two elements are of great force to the cherishing of man's life, so also are they to destroy it. And first it is to be noted, that what wrongs soever the people suffered through the cruelty of their enemies, the prophet accounts them as punishments laid upon them by God's hand, lest the faithful should think he was either asleep or otherwise occupied when they were so hardly dealt with. The state of the church is here set before our eyes, as it were in a glass; lest if it happen to us to be haled through fire and water, and tossed from post to pillar, the very strangeness of the thing might kill us, or put us in fear. The word רייה signifies properly *a moist ground*. But here, by a metaphor, it is taken for a gladsome and pleasant state,

as though the faithful should feed sweetly and at ease in pleasant and fruitful fields. The effect is, that although God chastise his servants sharply with temporal punishments, yet he always giveth them a happy and joyful end. For in my judgment they are deceived who restrain it to the possession of the land of Canaan, because here mention is made not of the wilderness only, but also the prophet comprehends the miseries of all times wherewith the people had been humbled.

13 I will come into thy house with burnt-offerings; I will pay my vows unto thee.

14 Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, in mine affliction.

15 I will offer unto thee burnt-offerings, with the perfume of rams: I will sacrifice oxen with goats. Selah.

16 Come ye, hear ye, and I will shew forth to all that fear God what things he hath done to my soul.

13 *I will come into, &c.*] Although the prophet have hitherto borne the person of the whole church, yet he speaks now more forcibly from the feeling of his own mind, and stirs up all men more vehemently to the duty of godliness. For when every man is well minded to give thanks by himself, they will contribute their part in the general harmony of God's praises more cheerfully. The effect is, that God's glory is shamefully suppressed, as often as he succoureth us in adversity, if after deliverance there follow not solemn thanksgiving. Neither promises he thankfulness simply. For in saying that he made solemn vows in the midst of his trouble, he shews the constancy of his faith. The exhortation of James, v. 13, is known; *Let him that is vexed and sad, pray: and let him that is merry, sing.* For we see many who, although in time of prosperity they fawn upon God with feigned praises; yet, as soon as they are pressed somewhat hardly, either they murmur furiously against him, or else become dull through utter discomfort. But the true trial of godliness is this; if a man, even in the deepest of his sorrow, lift up his heart to God, and prove the perseverance of his faith and patience by praying, and afterwards shew himself thankful. And it is not for nought that he says, He uttered his vows with his lips, meaning that he was never so far straitened with sorrow, but that by making prayer in express words he protested that he reposed his welfare in

the hand of God. Concerning vows, I must repeat briefly here what I have handled more at large in another place. That is, first, that the holy fathers never vowed anything to God but such as they knew to be allowed of him: and, secondly, that they vowed to none other end than to afford a record of their thankfulness. Wherefore too fondly do the papists pretend their example for a cloak to their vows, which are not only rash, but also blasphemous; inasmuch as, first, they lavishly obtrude upon God whatsoever comes at their tongues' end; and, secondly, purpose nothing less than the rightful end of them, but with devilish pride bind themselves to things that are not permitted them.

15 *I will offer unto thee, &c.*] It must needs be that either David or some one of the chief nobility speaks here. For the ability of men of mean estate would not suffer them to offer such rich and goodly sacrifices. It is probable, therefore, that David was the author of the Psalm, who vows to be at royal charges in making sacrifice. We know why God commanded sacrifices to be offered to him for thanksgiving in those days; namely, that the people might know that God's praises were stained and defiled with their uncleanness if they were not made holy by some other means. For howsoever we are purposed to praise God's name, yet should we but dishonour him with unclean lips, were it not that Christ hath offered himself in sacrifice once for all, to make us and all our doings holy. And therefore the apostle, Heb. x. 7, teaches that the praises which we offer unto God are acceptable through him. The prophet commends here the fume of his own burnt-sacrifice, when there went up nothing else from it to heavenward but a rank and offensive smell; but, as the rams and other sacrifices were a figure of Christ, they had a sweet savour before God. And now, when the figures of the law are abolished, the spiritual truth abides to us still; which is expressed better in the next verse, where the prophet says he will be a proclaimer of God's benefits. For even under the law it behoved that the outward ceremonies should aim at this mark, because else their pomp had been unprofitable. Therefore the proclaiming of God's grace was the true sauce that made the sacrifices savoury. And whereas he calls all the godly to him, he teaches us, by his example, that none are thankful enough save such as burn with longing to proclaim the grace which they have tasted, not only that all men may be stirred to praise him with one consent, but also that they may be encouraged to faith and hope by the proofs of his grace. And the reason why he directs his narration only to the worshippers of God, is because they only are meet hear-

ers, and to tell it to worldlings and hypocrites were but to sing as it were to the deaf.

17 I cried to him with my mouth, and I have exalted him under my tongue.

18 If I have had an eye to wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

19 Verily God hath heard me : he hath given ear to the voice of my prayer.

20 Blessed be God, who hath not put away my prayer, nor *withheld* his mercy from me.

17 *I cried to him, &c.*] He confirms that he is preserved by the help of God, because that after he had prayed he felt by the very effect that he had been favourable to him. For the fruit of vows does not a little illustrate God's grace, that it may be the more assured to us. Again, by the *mouth* and the *tongue*, he expresses the earnestness and vehemence of prayer, as he did a little before. If he had not prayed from the bottom of his heart, he had been rejected; but he makes his tongue to accompany his heart, that we may know that he prayed not coldly. Whereas some suppose that *under the tongue* imports the same thing as *in the heart*, it is against reason. For the speech that proceeds from the reflection of the tongue is said to spring under the tongue; like as, in another place, *The poison of adders is under their tongue*; Psalm x. 7. By the word *exalt* he means that God is not worshipped better with any other kind of honour than when salvation is sought at his hand. Whereby it appears that in the popedom he is spoiled of the chief part of his glory, where men's prayers are drawn away either to the dead or to images, and the calling upon God is accounted in manner as nothing. But, by the way, the prophet adds the order of praying purely and rightly, lest any man, overleaping faith and repentance, might thrust himself forth to pray unto God unadvisedly. We know how boldly the hypocrites and worldlings rush in and mingle themselves with the faithful, as often as the scripture pronounces in general that God is to be prayed unto. The prophet therefore, to shut the gate against such mockeries, requires soundness of heart. I confess, indeed, that in these words the prophet avouches his own innocence, like as David also often defends his own soundness from slanders, by the *real* record, as one may term it, of God's grace. But his intent was chiefly to

give a general rule by his own example, that we may learn to come unto God with a pure heart. The like place is also in John ix. 31, *God heareth not sinners*. True it is that none other than sinners are heard, for the form of praying is appointed to all alike without exception; namely, to desire to have their sins forgiven them. But although the faithful bring an unfeigned confession of their guilt to God, yet cease they to be sinners even in this very respect, that God acquitteth them upon their submission. For we must bear in mind Paul's admonition, 2 Tim. ii. 19, *That every one that calleth upon the name of the Lord should depart from iniquity*. Moreover, *to have an eye to wickedness in one's heart*, is not to be guilty in one's own conscience, (for the children of God are compelled to see their own faults, that they may mislike themselves for them; and this *having an eye* deserves to be accounted a singular virtue,) but to be full bent and sold to iniquity. Though the prophet makes mention expressly of the heart, to shew that not only his hands were clear, or that he was guiltless before men, but also to claim for himself the praise of innocence before God. For unless the inward trueness of the heart be answerable to the outward conversation, so that their lurk no naughtiness within, that which glitters before men shall be an abomination before God. And he adds, with an affirmation, that his prayers were heard, whence it is to be gathered that our hope shall never be disappointed provided we seek God with our whole heart.

20 *Blessed be God, &c.*] He closes the Psalm with thanksgiving, with which also he began it; and he adds the reason why he suffered not a repulse. For God is figuratively said *to put away one's prayer from him*, if he vouchsafe not to help him, as though he turned his back upon him. And he points out the wellspring, namely, because God withdrew not his mercy. For there is none other thing than his free favour alone that either appeaseth him towards us, or that purchases estimation and grace of obtaining to our prayers, that they be not fruitless.

PSALM LXVII.

It is a prayer for the happy estate of the church, not only that God should maintain it unharmed within Judah, but also that he should increase it with a new and unrosted extension of it. In which place he also treats briefly of God's kingdom, which was to be erected through the whole world by the coming of Christ.

[To the chanter upon Neginoth. A Psalm or Song.]

2 God, be merciful unto us, and bless us, and make his countenance to shine in us. Selah.

3 That they may know thy way upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.

4 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all people praise thee.

5 Let the people be glad and rejoice: for thou shalt judge the people in righteousness, and govern the people upon earth. Selah.

6 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all people praise thee.

7 The earth hath yielded forth her increase: and God, *even* our God, shall bless us.

8 God shall bless us; and all the coasts of the earth shall fear him.

2 *God, be merciful, &c.*] Although the prophet in this Psalm prophesies of the coming of Christ, under whom God's adoption should become common to the whole world, yet he prays for God's grace peculiarly to the Jews, according as we know that they were the first-begotten, *Exod. iv. 28*; so that God's blessing, which was to be spread through all nations, ought of right to begin with them. And although I have translated this whole Psalm in the mood of wishing, because almost all interpreters agree in this sense, yet one may as fitly translate all the verbs in the future tense, according as they are read in the Hebrew; and so would it be a holy rejoicing, to stay up the godly minds with, that they might not doubt of the uninterrupted enjoyment of God's favour, but rather hope for increase of it. Nevertheless, as it is received wellnigh by general consent, that the prophet in this place prays, it suffices me to have given the readers warning of it. Moreover, as he talks not of

aliens, but of the church itself, and yet what good soever he wishes to be bestowed upon it, he derives from the fountain of God's grace; it follows, that as long as we live, our being in a happy state, or flowing with abundance of all good things, and finally our living in prosperity, comes not elsewhere than from his pursuing us with his gracious love; which being true, who shall prevent him with his own deservings? Under the *enlightening of his countenance*, he seems to comprehend both; for when God both inspireth our hearts with the feeling of his love, and also sheweth himself merciful indeed, his countenance is said to shine clear upon us; like as it is said to be overcast with clouds, when being offended at our sins, he terrifieth our consciences, and taketh away the tokens of his favour.

3 *That they may know, &c.*] Here is an evident prophecy concerning the spreading abroad of God's grace, by which it came to pass that the heathen grew into one body with the seed of Abraham. The prophet therefore wishes that God's favour may be manifest in his elect people, that it may with the brightness thereof bring the Gentiles also into the fellowship of the same hope. By *the way of God* is meant the covenant, whereby he shewed himself to the people of old time to be their father; which he did afterwards more clearly by the Gospel, whereby the spirit of adoption is given more abundantly, from whence flows salvation; like as also Christ teacheth, that *eternal life is, to know the true God, &c.*; John xvii. 3.

4 *Let the people praise thee, &c.*] Because he had said that all nations should be partakers of the knowledge of God, which worketh salvation; now he says that they shall be publishers of so great grace, and therewithal exhorts them to thankfulness. And the repetition of it shews that he speaks of a new and unaccustomed matter. For there needed so such vehemence, if God had continued his grace towards the children of Abraham, after an accustomed manner and usual order. For first he says, *Let the people praise thee, yea, let all people praise thee*; and afterwards within awhile he repeats the same exclamation again. But the joy with the cause thereof is intermingled opportunely with the rest: for God cannot be praised truly and earnestly except men's minds be quiet and cheerful, so that they that be reconciled to God do joy in the assured hope of their salvation, *and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, triumphs in our hearts*, Phil. iv. 7. And the very rendering of the cause shews plainly the calling of the Gentiles. For God's reverence, whereof mention is made

his spiritual jurisdiction which he executeth in his church. For, in proper speech, God taketh not upon him to govern any others, than such as he gathereth unto his obedience by the doctrine of the law. And the term *righteousness* is used purposely in commendation of this governance. Furthermore, the same words almost are written in Isaiah, xi. 4, and in Micah iv. 3, where the doctrine concerning the spreading abroad of salvation through the whole world is preached.

7 *The earth, &c.*] After he has spoken of the chief grace of God, he adds, that whom God vouchsafeth to love, therein also doth he ply with his benefits, so that they that are in his favour can want nothing towards a blessed and happy life. But we must bear in mind what we have said before, namely, that as often as God garnished the people of old time with his benefits, he shone to the whole world as it were with a bright burning lamp, that he might allure the Gentiles to seek him. Therefore, if God deal liberally to his people whatsoever they have need of, he avouches that out of his bountifulness, as it were out of a fountain, there will spring the fear of God; verily, because all the coasts of the world will the more willingly yield themselves to his obedience, when they shall be taught by experience that he is so kind-hearted a father towards those that are his.

PSALM LXVIII.

Although David's purpose in this Psalm is to celebrate the victories which he had gotten over his enemies by the grace of God; yet, by commending God's might and goodness in general in the commencement, he propounds matter of praising him in the government of the whole world. Afterwards he comes to the deliverance of the chosen people, whereto he joins also the course of God's fatherly beneficence which he has always vouchsafed to express towards the offspring of Abraham. At length he treats at large upon the ground that he purposely undertakes, and with glorious commendations proclaims that excellent goodness of God which he himself had experience of privately, and which was at the same time manifest to all the people. Whence he gathers, that as soon as he was created king, the state of the church was duly settled, so that God, having as it were set up his throne, began then to reign again, who before that time seemed to have been gone afar off. And no doubt but that under this figure, he portrays that wondrous glory of God which at length appeared in Christ.

[To the chanter. A Psalm or Song of David.]

2 God will arise, and his enemies shall be scattered, and they that hate him shall flee from his presence.

3 Like as smoke is driven, so shalt thou drive them: like as wax melteth at the sight of fire, so shall the wicked perish at the presence of God.

4 But the righteous shall rejoice; they shall be glad at the presence of God; and they shall leap for joy.

5 Sing ye unto God, sing praise to his name: exalt ye him that rideth upon the clouds in his name JAH, and rejoice ye before his presence.

6 *He is* the father of the fatherless, and the judge of the widows; *even* God in the dwelling-place of his holiness.

7 *He is* the God that maketh the solitary to dwell together in one household; that bringeth prisoners out of the stocks: but rebels shall dwell in a dry land.

8 *God will arise, &c.* David in this first verse does

Psalm. The effect is this; Although God sit still for a time, while the ungodly persecute the church insolently and cruelly, yet at length he riseth up to judgment, and that there is defence enough for the faithful in his help, as soon as he stretcheth out his hand against the ungodly. Whereas the interpreters think this sentence to be taken out of Moses, Num. x. 35, I willingly grant it: for I doubt not but Moses taught all ages the form of praying; that the faithful should believe themselves to be safe upon trust of the ark of the covenant as the visible sign of God's presence. Only this difference is to be marked; that Moses prays, addressing God himself; and that David glories and avouches the same thing to be fulfilled daily, in very deed. For they that translate it in the way of exhorting; *Let God arise, &c.*, seem not, in my opinion, to consider his intent sufficiently. For the effect is this; that that which Moses has taught once, is known by experience to be true; namely, that as soon as God ariseth, he is endued with sufficient might and strength to overthrow all his enemies, and to put them utterly to flight. Nevertheless, the manner of exhorting displeases me not greatly, provided you resolve it as I have shewn; that is, as if he had said, God hath no need of great preparation to destroy his enemies, because it is in his hand to scatter them all as soon as he doth but lift up his finger. By the way he covertly intimates, that now and then it happens through God's sufferance, that the enemies prevail because it is not yet time for him to arise; and yet that they can do nothing without his leave, look they never so big. Also this is a thing full of most sweet comfort, that they are called *God's enemies*, whosoever trouble his church; because as he hath undertaken to defend us, he is no less moved at the wrongs that are done to us, than if his own majesty were violated. Moreover he expresses better by a goodly similitude, how easy and ready a matter it is for God to disappoint all the practices of our enemies; namely, even as smoke vanishes away when it is driven by the wind, or as wax melteth against the fire. It is almost incredible that the discomfiture of such well-compacted strength should be wrought so suddenly. But the Holy Ghost meant by this means to correct the over-fearfulness of our flesh; as if he should say, There is not that firm support in our enemies which we suppose, but our senses are dazzled as it were with smoke; yea, and we are deceived in their hardness also, because we consider not that the very mountains melt away at the sight only of God.

4 *But the righteous, &c.*] Here David declares that God

church. And he seems to match this gladness indirectly against the sorrow wherewith the minds of the godly were possessed a long while under Saul: as if he had said; After God hath humbled his servants for a time, he bringeth them a new light of joy, because they should not be always drowned in sorrow. By the way he teaches, that the godly are then truly cheered when they see God merciful towards them, and that he is chary of their welfare. Now although מִפְנֵי and לִפְנֵי often import the same thing, yet in this place I think the prophet puts a difference between them advisedly; for the wicked shun the presence of God, because they are afraid of it; but the righteous rejoice at the same presence, because they desire nothing more than to feel God near them. And we have seen in Psalm xviii. 26, that the presence of God dismayeth some, and gladdeth others at the heart, because as he is meek towards the meek, so dealeth he stubbornly with the stubborn. The prophet, with an accumulation of words, expresses that the joy of the godly shall be no mean joy, but such as shall ravish and possess all their affections.

5 *Sing ye unto God, &c.*] Now he begins to exhort the faithful to praise God. However, he propounds the ground of it in general at the beginning, according as I observed just now; namely, that he holdeth the whole world under his dominion and power; and again, that he vouchsafeth to cherish and maintain the wretched and despised with his care and defence. It is therefore a commendation of God's boundless power, that he rideth upon the clouds or heavens; for it follows that he is above all the world. For although by this manner of speaking the Holy Ghost warn us to form no gross or earthly conception of him, yet he especially commends his supreme sovereignty, that he may bring us to stand in awe of it; as if he should say, he surpasses all in suchwise, that all praises come far short of him. For when we have strained ourselves to the uttermost, surely we shall not comprehend heaven and earth, which notwithstanding are not able to match the amplitude of God's glory. That which is added soon after concerning *his name Jah*, may betaken diversely. We know that the letter י is often superfluous, and therefore it may be translated, *Jah is his name*. Others translate it word for word, *in Jah is his name*, which I disapprove not, though I had rather put the word *name* in the ablative case also, thus; *In Jah his name*, or *in his name Jah*. But we need the less to stand upon the words, because David's meaning is not ambiguous. For as superstition had at that time filled the

the only one God in his estate, as if he should bid all the idols begone, when the God of Israel cometh abroad. But as it were not enough for the faithful to worship God humbly, whom the ungodly also are compelled to reverence when they are amazed and tremble for fear, he bids them come to him merrily and cheerfully. And therefore soon after he preaches of his wonderful goodness, in that he disdaineth not to condescend even to *the fatherless and widows*; as if he should say, God's incomprehensible glory is no cause of standing aloof from him, that he should scorn us, although we are wretched and plunged in filthiness. For in naming the widows and fatherless, doubtless by the figure synecdoche he comprehends all such as the world passes over as unworthy of help. For commonly we bestow our courtesies where there appears some hope of recompense. Again, for the most part, honour and renown obtain the first place, whereby it comes to pass that the poor lie despised. That which follows, namely, *that God is in the dwelling-place of his holiness*, whether ye refer it to heaven, or to the temple, will agree very well with the present matter. For neither is God shut up in heaven to live idly, but rather heaven is as it were his throne, from whence to judge the world; and as he hath chosen himself a dwelling-place among men, from whence he calleth them familiarly to come to him, nothing is more fit to raise up the faith of the poor, than when they hear that they need not to seek him far off. In the next verse he adds other species also; namely, that he giveth plentiful issue to the childless and such as are alone, and that he letteth loose such as are bound in fetters. And in the last member he denounces God's judgment against the wicked and heathenish despisers thereof, not only to put them in fear, but also that the faithful should not envy their good fortune. The effect is, that with what kind of affliction soever we are straitened, there is comfort for us in God's hand wherewith to assuage our sorrows, and to disburden us of our cares. And although the wicked like well of themselves for a time, yet all that seems to them now most prosperous, shall in the end fall out unhappily for them. For *to dwell in a dry land*, is as much as to say, to be banished into a wilderness, that they may no more enjoy God's fatherly loving-kindness which they have wickedly abused.

8 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst journey in the wilderness.
Selah.

9 The earth shook, and the heavens dropped at the presence of this God: yea and Sinai *shook* at the presence of God, *even* of the God of Israel.

10 Thou, O God, shalt make a gracious rain to pour down upon thine inheritance, and thou refreshest it when it is weary.

11 Thy church shall dwell in it: thou shalt prepare for the poor in thy goodness, O God.

8 *O God, when thou, &c.*] Now he declares that God's goodness hath its abode properly in his church, which he hath peculiarly chosen that it should be the scene of his fatherly carefulness. And this is added by the prophet advisedly, that the children of Abraham should apply more nearly to themselves what was spoken before; because they are of the chosen people. Moreover, as their deliverance out of Egypt was a special and everlasting pledge of the love wherewith the adoption also that was made long before in the hand of Abraham was established, he touches the history thereof in few words. The matter comes to this; that God by that notable going forth out of Egypt, gave a token to all ages how much he loved his church. For what purpose served so many wonders, the shaking of heaven and earth, and the quaking of the mountains, but to make it apparent that God's power was wedded with the salvation of his people? Therefore he attributes to God the office of a captain that led forth his people under his auspices: and that, not only in passing through the Red sea, but also as long as the Israelites wandered in the wilderness. Moreover, I understand by the earth quaking, not only that at the publishing of the law, but also because in the continual progress of their journey, the order of nature was oftentimes reversed, as if all the elements had trembled at the presence of God. Notwithstanding, as God shewed his terrible power chiefly upon mount Sinai, because that both thunderings were heard in the heaven, and all the air was full of lightnings, the prophet purposely names that mountain in which the majesty of God was to be seen more brightly than anywhere else. Some coldly refer the pronoun demonstrative *it* to mount Sinai, whereas David rather sets forth the glory of the God of Israel. For by a like figure the prophets, in more places than one, declare that the God which is worshipped among the children of Abraham, is no imaginary God, nor the religion that is appointed in his law

his people into the present sight of God, confirms the certainty of faith, and distinguishes it from the perplexing errors of the heathen; and at the same time he indirectly censures the madness of the world, which shaping itself a God of wood and stone, and in gold and silver, is so far from profiting in the knowledge of God, that it deviates still farther into vanity by its fallacies.

10 *A rain of wills, &c.*] Here David commends the continual course of God's grace, since the time that the people entered into the land that was promised them. For it is called *the heritage of God*, which he had assigned to his children. Others understand the church, but improperly; for soon after he will add, that *the church of God shall dwell in it*. Worthily does the land of Caanan obtain this name, as it was delivered to them in right of inheritance by the heavenly Father. Moreover, since the children of Abraham were first placed there, David declares that God never ceased from the office of a most loving and careful householder, because he always sent them rain to prepare them food and sustenance. Further, as נִרְבָּה, which is put in the plural number instead of a proper adjective, signifies *an unconstrained willingness, or a mere liberality*, I willingly agree with those interpreters who refer it to God's free goodwill; as if David had said that God had always of his own accord had a care to feed and sustain his people. For when others translate *pluviam voluntatum* a sweet shower, or a rain of pleasure, or a pleasant rain; and others, a mild rain, and such a one as streameth gently of its own accord without violence, which we call a gentle shower, I doubt whether it would apply. There are some also that translate it a great and a sweeping shower. But I have shewn already what pleases me best. God, therefore, shewed a sign of his bounteousness in watering the land with seasonable rain. And I doubt not but he had an eye to the situation of Judah, whose fruitfulness depended upon the dew or showers from heaven. In the same respect he says that it is refreshed when it is out of heart: and the reason is added, because God had given it to his chosen people to dwell in; as if he should say, It is in none other respect so blessed, than because it is the holy dwelling-place of the church. And that the Jews may the better acknowledge this bounteousness, he likens them to hungry persons that are fed from hand to mouth. For although God fed them daintily even to the full, with store of corn, with plenty of wine, with honey, and with oil, yet he so tempered his gracious goodness, that they were fain to depend upon him only. Others take נִרְבָּה for abundance of food, but

although I disapprove it not, yet I rather incline to the contrary sense ; namely, that God is not led to provide for his servants so warily, by any other consideration than for his own goodwill and pleasure.

12 The Lord shall give matter of talk to the women reporters of the great army.

13 The kings of armies shall flee : they shall flee : and the woman that dwelleth in the house shall divide the spoils.

14 If ye lie among the pots, *yet shall ye be as the feathers of a dove covered with silver, and whose hinder parts are as yellow as gold.*

15 When the Almighty scattereth kings in it : thou shalt be made white in Salmon.

12 *The Lord shall, &c.*] David now commends the victories whereby God had notably set forth his power in maintaining the welfare of his people. And whereas he himself, having put his enemies to flight, had quieted the land and enlarged the bounds of his kingdom, he ascribes the praise of all his policies to God. For in avouching that it belongs to God to give song of commendation or triumph, he teaches by this figure that the prosperous success of battle is in his hand. Again, he says that women are reporters of the army, because it was an ancient custom for women to sing the songs of victory ; like as Miriam, the sister of Moses, with a company of women, sang the praises of God upon timbrels ; Exod. xv. 20. Also female minstrels sang David's triumph when he had slain Goliath and overthrown the Philistines ; 1 Sam. xviii. 6. Notwithstanding, by the name of song, as I said just now, David means that victory proceeds from none but God alone. Though at the same time he puts the faithful in mind of their duty, to publish God's benefits with becoming thankfulness. In the next verse he teaches, that although the enemies march forth furnished with never so great and strong armies to destroy the church, yet shall they be scattered. And he seems to report the song of the women, though it may as well be taken in his own person. And this circumstance does not a little enhance the grace of God, that most potent kings were put to flight, whose power the Jews had been far too weak to encounter. For whence came it to pass that they not only went their way disappointed, but also were chased into remote wilds, where they were so far from that

because God wonderfully set himself against them, in defence of his people? And he seems to repeat the word *flee* twice, because the invasions of the enemies were often repulsed by help from heaven. Moreover, he notes the greatness of the prey by this circumstance, that part of it came to the women's share that sat quiet at home; as if he should say, Not only the soldiers returned well decked with the spoil of their enemies, but even timorous women also were partakers of the prey, from the vast richness thereof.

14 *If ye lie among, &c.*] Because he had just now said that God fighteth for his people, now in the way of correction he adds, that although the faithful happen sometimes to lie in darkness, yet God in time cometh forth and delivereth them. And it is not to be doubted but he indirectly touches that miserable and mournful time, when the people of God were sorely afflicted under Saul. For the restitution was the more renowned and notable, because the people emerged suddenly out of darkness into light. Although the doctrine has a larger scope: for it admonishes us generally, that the faithful, even in the midst of afflictions, are kept as it were whole by the wondrous working of God, or else are suddenly set up again, so that there appear no signs at all of adversity. For the words admit either sense; that is, that although they lie in smoke and darkness, yet cease they not to look bright; or else, that their deliverance dispels the blackness which they have contracted by their miseries. Whichever you choose, it comes to this effect, that the faithful are never so consumed or overwhelmed with afflictions, but that they continue safe. And that does he teach by a goodly figure to be as if *doves* among pots or caldrons should contract no blackness upon their wings, but should still keep the native beauty of their hue. Whence it follows that the church enjoys not always cheerful serenity, but, plucked out of darkness, recovers her brightness as if she had never been touched with any misfortune.

15 *When the Almighty.*] Because the word פָּרַשׁ signifies to stretch out, or to divide, this passage might also be translated thus, *When he led them about in triumph*. Nevertheless it suits better translated *scattering*, and it answers to the flight whereof he made mention a little before. There is more of obscurity in the second member; for some refer the word תְּשַׁלֵּן to the congregation of God, as though David should say it was beautiful for whiteness. Notwithstanding, it may be also of the second person, in this sense; Thou, O God, dost make it white no less than mount Salmon is white with snow. However, as it differs scarce anything in the effect of the matter, the readers may follow

which they choose. Of this, indeed, I have no doubt, that David proceeds with that which he spake just now of the whiteness of silver. Therefore, although the land were covered with darkness through the violent invasion of the enemies, yet, says David, she recovered her whiteness, so that she became as white as snow, like mount Salmon, which is well known to be snowy. Others think it to be a noun appellative, and translate it *a dim shadow*, but it is better not to depart from the received translation. By the way, I think the allusion to the etymology of the word probable. For as צֶלֶם signifies *a shadow*, therefore was mount Salmon so called, as it were, darksome. And the similitude will suit the place very well, that like as the snow makes the darksome hill white, even so the fair face of the land resumed its brightness when the dimness was removed.

16 The hill of God, the hill of Basan : a high hill, the hill of Basan.

17 Why hop ye, O ye high hills? The hill in which it hath pleased God to dwell : verily, the Lord will dwell for ever.

18 The chariots of God are twenty thousand thousand of angels: the Lord is among them, in the sanctuary of Sinai.

16 *The hill of God, &c.*] Here he notes the cause and beginning of God's so great goodness; that is, because he had chosen mount Sion to be his palace and temple, whence his grace should flow upon all the people. And as this promise was made to David, he thereby justly proves himself a lawful king, and ordained by God, because mount Sion was adorned with this dignity and prerogative. For they were things that went jointly together, for David to sit on the royal throne to govern the people, and for God to have his holy dwelling-place upon that hill. Nevertheless the words may be understood two ways; either that he compares God's hill to the hill of Basan, as being like it, or else that he matches it against it. The first is received by the consent almost of all interpreters; namely, that although the fruitfulness of mount Basan be great, yet doth Sion excel it. Now, though it imports little to the effect of the matter, yet the distinction will be no less apt if we read it severally *the hill of God*; and afterwards, on the contrary part, *mount*

hill of Sion; as if David had said, There is but one hill of God, namely, the same which he hath hallowed by his promise. And although mount Basan be high and renowned for its fatness, yet let it come, yea and all other mountains with it, and there shall be no cause why they should be proud or vaunt themselves; for they cannot match Sion, which the Lord of his own good pleasure hath preferred before all others. Nevertheless, if you choose to refer the whole verse together to mount Sion, it shall be called a high hill and a fruitful, because the blessing of God, by which the Jews excelled all men living besides, flowed from thence.

17 *Why hop ye, &c.*] In this verse there is no obscurity or doubt. For after David has declared that that only hill in all the world pleased God, he lowers the pride of all the highest mountains. Howbeit, as he repeats now, in the plural number, that which he had said just now of mount Basan alone, it leads me to think that first mount Basan, and afterwards whatsoever there is of loftiness in the world, is matched against Sion. Moreover, as David speaks of the mountains metaphorically, there must a simple sense be gathered from this figure; namely, that Christ's kingdom, which God had begun in the person of David, doth far surpass all the gloriousness of the world. Meanwhile, not without cause does David rise up to repress the presumptuousness of the world. For we know how much Christ's kingdom is scorned by earthly and heathenish men, who, being given wholly to their pleasures or riches, are blind to God's spiritual graces. And so much the wider extends the profit of this doctrine, as the flesh vaunts itself with vain pride so soon as any slender occasion is given. For if they that have no cause at all to be proud cannot refrain from pride, how should the rich and wealthy escape challenging some excellence to themselves. Notwithstanding, how much soever they sooth themselves, yet becomes it the faithful to content themselves with this one prerogative, that it hath pleased God to dwell in the midst of them. For as long as they are joined unto God, in whom only resides their full happiness, there is no reason why they should find fault with their estate.

18 *The chariots of God, &c.*] Because God's presence is commonly esteemed after a niggardly sort, and not to the full value of it, David commends it here with an honourable style. For, as our nature is prone to misdoubting, whatsoever dangers we meet with in this world outweigh God's power in the balance of our apprehension. And hence comes trembling at every trifling temptation, because we

underrate it. David therefore, minding to cure this malady, brings forth innumerable hosts of angels, which may easily despatch all impediments in the world. And although he name but two myriads, yet the manner of speaking implies as much as if he should say that God hath countless hosts in readiness at his command, for the maintenance of our welfare; which ought to suffice to encourage our hearts, although a hundred deaths menace us. What he adds, that God *is among them*, pertains also to the commendation of God's ready help; as if he had said that God can no more be divested of his power, so as not to keep all the angels as it were close under him, than he can be separated from his own being, or substance. Though he, at the same time, admonishes us that God alone is of more force than ten worlds of angels, so to speak. Moreover, lest the long distance which we are wont to imagine to be betwixt God and us should stop the course of our faith, he sets before us mount Sinai, where his majesty appeared openly; whence it follows that he abides still in his sanctuary. For to what end hath God displayed himself wonderfully there, but to shew that his covenant is the bond of holy union between him and the children of Abraham? according also, as Moses said, Deut. xxx. 12: *Say not in thy heart, Who shall climb up into heaven? who shall go down into the deep? who shall pass over the sea? for the word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, &c.* Then, under the name of Sinai, David means that to the intent we may be preserved by God's invincible defence, we must not seek assurance of his presentness elsewhere than in the law and the prophets.

19 Thou art gone up on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts in men; yea, and the rebels, that the Lord God may dwell there.

20 Blessed be God from day to day, God shall load us with our own welfare. Selah.

21 God *is* to us the God of our welfares; and in the hand of the Lord God are the issues of death.

22 Surely God will wound the head of his enemies, yea even the hairy scalp of him that goeth on in his wickedness.

23 The Lord hath said, I will turn again from Basan: I will bring *them* again from the bottom of

24 That thy foot may be dipped in blood, and the tongue of thy dogs *in the blood* of the enemies, by him.

25 They have seen thy going, O God; they have seen the goings of my God *and* my King in the sanctuary.

19 *Thou art gone up, &c.*] There is no doubt but that by comparing the diversity of the times, the new grace is set forth, which being buried under Saul, shone forth again when David had gotten the kingdom. For there is a tacit antithesis between *lying low*, and *going up on high*; as if he had said that God's glory had not appeared so manifestly in the dispersion of the people, as it had done in old time before. For as Saul's kingdom had its beginning from an evil and unlawful ground, it could not but be accursed, until God restored the light of his grace under David; by which happy success it was made manifest that David reigned by lawful authority, because he was chosen by God. Now although David had made war manfully, yet he removes the praise of the victory from himself, and ascribes it only unto God. For he says it was he that had taken his enemies prisoners, and compelled them to pay tribute, yea and that had quelled the stubbornness of the rebels, and brought them to subjection. And it is most certain, that they whom he terms here סוררים, that is to say, *rebels, stiffnecked, or revoltors*, are distinguished from the other enemies whom he had said had been taken prisoners a little before. As if he should say, not only such as gave place upon distrust of their own strength, and such as chose rather to yield themselves, than to resist obstinately, were brought under subjection, but also even the proudest of them all were tamed. Afterwards he notes to what end; namely, that *God should dwell* in the midst of his people, and by his defending them, shew them to be blessed, as many as shrouded themselves under his protection. Howbeit, as Paul, Eph. iv. 8, somewhat subtly makes this passage apply to Christ, we must see how well the same agrees with the meaning of David. Surely this principle can by no means be overthrown, that David was made sovereign over the people in old time, upon condition that under the figure thereof, Christ the eternal king should begin his reign. For we must always bear in mind the promise of the everlasting succession, which was at length established in the person of Christ. Then like as God avouched his own power by the hand of David, to the intent

so in his only-begotten Son Christ, he shewed the very uttermost of his height. Furthermore, that each member may agree with the other; before that Christ was exalted, he abased himself, not only in taking upon him the form of a servant, but also in humbling himself even to the death of the cross. Therefore, that the shadow may be answerable to the truth, Paul says that the thing which David had prophesied in Psalm xxii. 7 was fulfilled in deed in the person of Christ, because that ere he ascended up, he had been cast down to the lowest parts of the earth, when he became the scorn of men and the outcast of the people. Moreover, lest this *going up* may be restrained to the body of Christ, the force and fruit thereof is described; namely, that he hath brought heaven and earth under his dominion. For such as before were unsubdued enemies, them hath he compelled to obedience, and made them tributary to him; in like manner as the doctrine of the Gospel tends to this end, that the unbelievers, laying aside the pride and stubbornness of the flesh, should submit themselves and all that they have to Christ, and that all loftiness should be brought down, and men's thoughts and affections become prisoners unto him. And as for the fiends and all the reprobates, whom wilful malice stirs evermore to rebellion, he holdeth them fettered in his secret power, that they cannot confound and destroy all things at their pleasure. Thus far the similitude applies excellently. But whereas Paul says that Christ gave gifts to men, he departs somewhat from David's words, because, to adapt himself to the unskilful, he follows the Greek translation. But in the matter itself there is no disagreement: for like as David with the spoil of his enemies enriched not himself, but his people, so Christ sought not to be enriched himself, seeing he wanteth nothing, but made his enemies tributary to him, to garnish his church. Therefore in respect of the secret fellowship that is between the head and the body, both of them are truly and properly said; namely, that God being manifested in the flesh hath distributed to his people the gifts which he hath taken from his prisoners; and also no less agrees that with the person of Christ which is said in the end of the verse, *that God obtained victory, in order to dwell among us*. For Christ went not away from us, that we should seek far for him, but to fulfil all things, like as Paul also says, Eph. iv. 10. For by ascending into heaven, he both exhibited more fully the power of his godhead, and although he dwell not upon earth after the flesh, yet feedeth he our souls spiritually with his flesh and blood;

20 *Blessed be God, &c.*] David tempers the titles which he reckons up concerning God's matchless helps, that he never departeth from this mark; namely, that the church continues in safety through the continual care and defence of God. And therefore he says now, *Blessed be God from day to day.* And he adds, that salvation is to be hoped for at his hand, with abundance of all good things. Some translate the word יַעֲמִיד, *shall load*, and some translate it, *shall carry*, but there is no difference in the matter itself. Therefore let it suffice us to know that there is promised a continual succession of bounteousness to the faithful; as if David should say he is never weary of benefiting, but loadeth his people with fresh benefits from time to time. Perhaps also the letter ה, which often imports as much as the pronoun demonstrative *the*, is used emphatically, as though he should point with his finger to the God on whom all the righteous ought to lean; according also as in the next verse, when he says, *God is to us the God of our welfare*, the demonstration seems not to be superfluous. And these meanings agree well together, because the effect comes to this purpose, that God is the continual deliverer of his church. And forasmuch as men's minds are too prone to wandering, there is a bridle put upon them, to hold them under the one and undoubted God. Now, though God's salvation is open to all men, yet is the privilege of feeling themselves to be by all means preserved by God, worthily restrained to the chosen, because the reprobates turn life into death through their own unthankfulness. And not without cause has he put *welfares* in the plural number, that we may know, that although innumerable deaths besiege us, God hath also innumerable ways of preservation in readiness, that through being delivered to-day, we should hope well against to-morrow. To the same purpose I refer the second member, where he teaches that the issues of death are in his hand. For when some translate it, *the issues unto death*, as though David meant that God could speedily and with ease be avenged of his enemies, and destroy them, it seems to me to be constrained. But the other exposition flows very smoothly, that God hath wonderful, and diverse, and secret ways, whereby to raise his servants from death to life. For he determines in what way God is the preserver of his people; not that he always preventeth death itself, but that when he hath suffered them to be after a sort swallowed up, he suddenly makes a way out for them. And this is so much the more to be marked, that we may learn not to measure his help by our own understanding, but, even when

the hand of God, whose property it is to make a way where no way is.

22 *Surely God will, &c.*] Because, since the church is assailed on all sides by strong and cruel enemies, and endures continual assaults, it cannot otherwise be preserved than by strong and forcible defence, David brings in God armed with terrible power to overthrow all the ungodly. And because he continues the same doctrine, the particle **78** may be taken inferentially; the simple affirmation seems however to suffice. But first it is to be noted, that all such are called God's enemies as wrongfully trouble the godly, that we should not doubt but that he will always interpose to defend us. Now, how careful he is of our welfare, is very well expressed in these forms of speech; *God will wound the head of his enemies; yea, even the hairy scalp, &c.*; as though he should say that as many as trouble the church shall be wounded to death, or stricken with an incurable stripe; and especially where a little after he describes God falling upon them with much slaughter.

23 *The Lord hath said, &c.*] Because the Israelites should not joy in their victories after the manner of the heathen, but acknowledge God to be the author of them, David calls them back to their first beginnings. And also that they may trust to be always preserved by his grace, he puts them in remembrance how that even from their very first beginning their fathers had emerged as it were from hell by the victorious hand of God. For this sentence implies as much as if he had said, God hath not therefore delivered his people once out of the hands of the giants, and out of the bottom of the Red sea, that he should give them over now in like dangers, but he will be at hand to deliver them as often as need shall require. For we know it is a common thing with the prophets, as often as they mean to extol God's grace mightily, to allege the history of their deliverance, that from the first original of their welfare, the faithful may gather that their progress shall be the same hereafter. And that the sentence may have a more lifelike character, he brings in God speaking. And by these words he challenges to God the power and office of raising from life to death; because the passing of the people through the Red sea, and their conquests against the warlike nations, were a certain kind of resurrection. Some expound it, *I will chase the enemies out of Basan*, but it cannot stand, and is at variance with the context; for there follows immediately after, *I will bring them again out of the bottom of*

but rather so as that the faithful may perceive how dear and precious they are to him, seeing he is so rigorous in their behalf. For we know that even David himself was not of a cruel disposition, but as he weighed God's judgments with a pure and upright mind, he might with a holy zeal rejoice in the destruction of the reprobates. Also it is to be noted, that what belongs to the whole church is ascribed to God alone, according as he executeth just vengeance on the reprobates by the hands of his servants. In the end of the verse some draw the portion *by him* to the king of their enemies; but it is no part of David's meaning. The sense then is, that the tongues of dogs shall be red with licking, so great shall the number of carcases be on all hands.

25 *They have seen, &c.*] This verse may be understood as well of battles, or conduct of wars, as of thanksgiving. For we know that when there happened any notable victory, the faithful were wont to go forth in order, to offer peace-offerings in the temple. Accordingly, some refer the *goings of God* to the throngs of people flocking together into the sanctuary. I, however, have no objection that the charge of captain-general, in guiding and ordering the armies, should be attributed unto God. For that which follows a little after, *in the sanctuary*, is an apt allusion to the visible symbol of God's presence. For whence came it that God took upon him the charge of governing the people, and went before them to repulse the violence of their enemies, but because he had promised that he would hear the praise of his people out of the sanctuary? Therefore he is said to have been seen for the purpose of leading his people under his auspicious guidance, even as if he should have come forth of that holy habitation. And therefore David, in calling him his king, turns away the eyes of the people from himself, lest the name of *king*, which was given by sufferance to a mortal man, might cast a shadow on the heavenly pre-eminence of the supreme head. For although he speak in the person of the whole realm, yet does he not in anywise exempt himself from the number.

26 The singers went before, the players of instruments followed; in the midst are the damsels playing with timbrels.

27 Bless ye God in the congregations, *and* the Lord out of the fountain of Israel.

28 There was little Benjamin their ruler, the princes of Judah in the congregation of them, the

26 *The singers, &c.*] Doubtless he speaks not now of the army ordered to battle, but of the solemn assembly of the people, wherein the praises of God were to be sung for joy of victory. And forasmuch as God had openly shewn himself to be the captain of the wars, the triumph is justly yielded unto him. Therefore he brings in here the companies severally sorted for singing God's praises, and mentions the timbrel-players by name, because it was the custom in those days for women to play upon timbrels, though now-a-days it would be absurd among us. Whereas there follows, *Praise ye God out of the fountain*, some take it to be, *out of the heart*, because we know that feigned praises, which sound only in the lips, are accursed before God. Notwithstanding, the natural meaning of this saying is, that as many as are descended from the holy patriarch Jacob should come together to praise God. For though all of them were not answerable to their calling, yet does he well to call to this office of godliness the whole race which was chosen of God. Nevertheless, if any man had rather that by the name of *fountain*, or *offspring*, the hypocrites, who falsely boasted themselves to be the children of Abraham, since they were degenerate, should be distinguished from the good and holy ones, I will not gainsay it: for only the followers of Abraham's faith are accounted as his lawful children. But seeing he speaks generally of the holy assemblies, it is strange that he should place the tribe of Benjamin first. Some interpreters conjecture, that because the Benjamites were ready at David's hand by reason of their nearness, and the two tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali more united and friendly to him, though they were far off in point of place, therefore he gave them this honour. Others will, that by the figure synecdoche he should by the far and near betoken the whole realm. But as there might be some other cause, which is unknown to us, it is better to leave it open, although I reject not probable conjectures. Many think that Benjamin is termed *little* by reason of the fewness of men, because that tribe was almost wiped out for the wickedness of the Gibeonites; but it seems not to agree. For David, in mustering the chief setters forth of God's praises, would not have given any inkling of that disgrace. But as the prophets, when they speak of the offsprings of the patriarchs, often allude to the patriarchs themselves, it is no marvel that the posterity of Benjamin are called a *little* tribe, in respect of their father, who was the least among the sons of Jacob, and which tribe had not been so populous

that Benjamin is called the *ruler* because Saul, the first king, was born of that tribe, the memory of which David would renew inopportunately, as we know that the disorder of that time is everywhere condemned in the scriptures, and Saul's dominion was swallowed by the election of David, which is chiefly commended in this place. But rather it seems to me likely that that tribe is adorned with this title of sovereignty in respect of their fewness; as if he should say that although the Benjamites excelled neither in greatness of number nor in power, yet did they make one head. And this seems to agree fitly; unless perhaps you had rather think that there was some chief captain of that tribe, as there were in the other two tribes which he mentions; or else perhaps that the whole people of Benjamin had done some notable exploit in some battle. Now although he deck these tribes with an honourable title, yet soon after he calls them back to the chief head, making the nobles of Judah generals in mustering all the armies. Some supply the copula *and* thus; *The princes of Judah, and the congregation of them.* Others translate it, *And the stoning of them.* But in my judgment the first is the most correct, that the *congregation* should be referred to the tribe, under whose standard it warred. Therefore, the chief place and pre-eminence of sovereignty is challenged to the tribe of Judah, to whom it belonged of right to rule the people.

29 Thy God hath commanded thy strength: stablish, O God, that which thou hast wrought in us.

30 Out of thy temple upon Jerusalem, kings shall offer a present unto thee.

31 Destroy the company of the reed, the herd of bulls, with the calves of the people, trampling in wedges of silver; scatter the nations that are desirous of wars.

29 *Thy God hath, &c.*] As nothing is more natural to men than to challenge to themselves the benefits which it would become them to impute to God, David avouches again that his people got not the upperhand of their enemies by their own might, but that strength was given them from heaven. For he avouches that God was the author of their strength, though the Israelites fought manfully; and by this means he exhorts them to thankfulness, and rebukes the

bow them to meekness, he admonishes them therewith that they have need also of the continuance of the same grace hereafter. For whence comes the haughtiness of the flesh, but that forgetting our helplessness, we flee not humbly to God, that he may supply our wants? By the way we are taught, that it is not enough if God prevent us with his grace, except he also sustain us with his help all our life long. For if this be truly avouched concerning the outward strength of making war where we have to deal but with flesh and blood, it applies much more truly to our souls. Therefore when we must fight with Satan, with sin, and with the world, we must needs sink and quail every moment, unless God strengthen us to hold out. We must then assure ourselves that whatsoever power we have, it flows only from God, and is instilled into us by his command; and not only that the beginning thereof is of him, but even the very continuance of it also. That which follows in the next verse, *out of thy temple*, is connected with the same sentence. For there is added a reason why he hath vouchsafed to arm that people rather than others, with his strength; namely, because it was his will to put forth his strength out of the sanctuary and the ark of the covenant. In which respect also, David declared just now that he was the God of the people of Israel. Forasmuch then as it was not for nought, that God commanded that he should be worshipped in the sanctuary, whence also he had promised that he would be near at hand to his people, therefore is he said now to have commanded his strength out of his temple, because the certainty of grace was to be fetched out of the covenant and promises. Others translate, *in Jerusalem*; but it is flat, and perverts the meaning of the prophet. For he prays that strength may be poured out of the sanctuary upon the chosen people, which is, by the figure synecdoche, comprehended under the name of that royal city. But here it is demanded why he makes mention of the temple, which was not then built. It is more likely that the temple or palace is taken for the tabernacle, than to feign an anticipation, as many suppose. And it is certain that the ark of the covenant was already settled in Sion. Now like as erewhile he ascribed the victories that he had gotten, to God, so now he challenges the fruit of them to himself. For he says that the kings which were brought into subjection, should not only become tributaries to him, and to his successors, but also acknowledge God as the conqueror of them. Wherefore so much the more became it the faithful themselves to offer sacrifices of

but I approve of the distinction which the most skilful in the Hebrew tongue observe; namely, that this word גַּעַר, when the letter ג is put into it, is taken for *to rebuke*; but when it is construed simply, then it is taken for *to destroy*. That the word חַיַּית should in this place be taken for *a beast*, is quite inadmissible. Truly, David's prayer is definite, that God should defend his own peculiar people, and destroy their sanguinary enemies. Whereas he calls them *the company of the cane or reed*, he does not by this title betoken their weakness, but a kind of armour, as if he should term them *spear-men*. For as in some countries, reeds grow into trees, or at least become as firm as timber, spears and darts were wont to be made of them. And we know that the eastern people did most commonly use darts in battle. Afterwards he calls them *a herd or multitude of bulls*, by reason of their cruelty. For although strong men are called in Hebrew אַבִּירִים, yet, as the same name is also transferred to bulls, as we have seen heretofore, and as David adds here immediately after, when he called them *calves or bullocks of the people*, I doubt not but by the metaphor he censures the fierceness and cruelty of his enemies, or at least, in exaggerating their strength, confesses that the Israelites would be too weak to withstand them, except they were aided by God. The next member is not without ambiguity; namely, *trampling in wedges, or pieces of silver*. The word רַפַּס signifies *to trample*, or *tread under foot*: but as it is put here in the conjugation Hithpael, it must be resolved word for word thus; *which makes himself to trample*; and some understand it to be spoken of bragging or boasting. Others elicit a quite contrary sense; namely, that the enemies humble themselves, and, in token of submission, bring pieces of silver. But to what purpose should David desire to have his vanquished enemies destroyed and cut up, who, their spirits being humbled, submissively paid him tribute already? They answer, that although they who are stript of their arms, shew not their pride openly, yet they lay it not altogether aside, but are ever ready to rebel, especially the enemies of the church, because they always foster venomous hatred, though they hold themselves in for a time, and burst out into new rage as soon as occasion is given them. But as there needs no such wresting of David's words, I had rather understand that they vaunt themselves with treading upon plates of silver. And it may be that they wore silver buckles upon their shoes, according as we know what boundless luxury reigned always among the people of the east. Surely, that which follows, that is to say, *scatter the people that delight in wars*, admits not the

aforesaid interpretation of submission. For he shews there that they seek after wars and insurrections without cause; and that although no man provoke them, yet they, of their own accord, are eager to assail such as are quiet. But seeing that David, who had so often got the victory, commends to God the maintenance of the welfare of himself and his whole realm, hereby we may learn that there is no quiet state of the church to be hoped for in this world; because Satan stirs up new enemies from time to time, and God also by this means exerciseth and trieth his servants. And when he compares them to bulls and calves, and saith that *they delight in wars*, by these words he exhorts the faithful to meekness, that they may find help ready for them in God. For the more insolently our enemies rush upon us, and the more furiously they follow their own lusts, so much the more forward will God be to succour us; considering that it is his proper office to subdue bulls and warlike giants. Forasmuch then as this prayer teaches us that God will set himself against all violent persons which are carried away with heady lust to do mischief; doubtless we may hope for the scattering of our enemies whenever we are wrongfully assaulted, if we flee to God for help with quiet minds.

32 Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiop shall hastily stretch out her hands unto God.

33 Ye kingdoms of the earth, sing ye unto God; sing praise unto the Lord. Selah.

34 That rideth upon the heavens of heavens of old time: behold he will send out a mighty sound by his voice.

35 Give God the power over Israel: his majesty and strength is in the clouds.

36 Dreadful art thou, O God, in thy sanctuaries: the God of Israel is he that shall give strength and power to his people. Blessed be God.

32 *Princes shall come, &c.*] Again he returns to rejoicing, and confirms that which he said a little before, namely, that kings should come to pay tribute; which he affirms of the Egyptians and Ethiopians by name. Whereby we gather, that this prophecy is extended to the person of Christ, by whose leading both the Egyptians and Ethiopians at length received the yoke of God. The word תרץ, which I have translated *shall hastily stretch out*, imports as much as, *shall cause to run*. But the harshness of the metaphor

was to be mitigated: however, it is to be doubted whether he betoken forwardness of obedience, or whether he mean that they shall but humbly crave pardon by holding up their hands unto God, because it is the gesture of such as pray. But as submission is expressed by either of these ways, it is enough to understand David's drift; namely, that Ethiop and Egypt shall come into subjection to God; and not they only, but also the coasts of the world that are afar off. And now he proceeds further than before, when he bids the kingdoms of the world sing to God; by which manner of speaking he denotes that those shall become willing worshippers of God who before despised him. For the knowledge alone of God, as I have said elsewhere, unties and loosens men's tongues to praise the name of God. And therefore hereby is proved the calling of the heathen, inasmuch as Moses and the prophets allure them to offer the sacrifice of praise. Moreover, lest any man should think it strange for the whole world to be called to the service of God, who heretofore had been contented with one people, David adds that notwithstanding this, he hath lawful dominion over all parts of the earth, because *he rideth upon all the heavens*. By which speech he means, according as I have said in the beginning of this Psalm, that he is the sovereign Lord of all creatures, and governeth the whole world at his discretion. Now although this, being spoken generally, procures reverence to the majesty of God, yet must not the circumstance of the place be neglected, because in making mention of the Gentiles, which were at that time aliens to the church, he extends God's authority to them by right of creation; as if he should say, It is no marvel that God, who sitteth upon the heavens, embraceth all the dwellers upon the earth. The reason why he terms the heavens, *the heavens of old time*, is that we may know that all mankind was under his hand even forthwith from the beginning. But the glory of God shineth forth the brighter in this behalf, that though the fabric of the heavens is immeasurable, its motions so swift, and revolutions so diverse encounter each other, yet the most perfect harmony and adaptation is manifest in them; and this nice and beautiful order has been continued in one unvarying course for so many ages. We see then how the antiquity of the heavens does the better commend God's wonderful workmanship. Moreover, as soon as he has done speaking of the creation, he comes down to the thunders; which he denotes by the mighty voice, according also as we have seen in Ps. xxix. 4. Although the manner of speech may be expounded two ways; either that by his command he stirreth up thunder, which shakes both

heaven and earth with hideous noise; or else, that he uttereth his voice strongly in the thunder. But in the same place which I cited just now, I have more largely declared that it is not without cause, that God is set forth thundering to us, considering that there is nothing that more effectually pierces men's minds to strike fear into them. And that he may wake up our drowsiness, or rather correct our dullness, placing us as it were in the actual scene, he uses the demonstrative participle, *behold, lo, or see.*

35 *Give strength, &c.*] He alludes to the last sentence, where he had said, that God utters a strong voice. For, to speak properly, it lies not in our power to give him anything. But because we defraud him of his due honour, after David has brought him in thundering with a dreadful crash, he bids us in turn, to sound forth his praises. Notwithstanding, lest the Gentiles might follow after vanity as usual, in their own devices, he calls them back to the doctrine of law, whereby God hath disclosed himself; as if he should say, they must needs proceed from the creation of the world, and the government of the same, to that doctrine by which God hath approached familiarly to men, lest they should wander out of the way. Hereto pertains the title of *the God of Israel*. Nevertheless, he will not only have God's might praised with men's tongues, but also therewith he exhorts them to faith, because we then properly yield strength unto God when we are satisfied with his defence only. Therefore after he has said that *his power is in the clouds*, he adds immediately, that *he is dreadful in his sanctuaries*; that is to say, that he utters such power out of his temple, as is of sufficient strength to beat down his enemies. For whereas some expound it of heaven and earth, it agrees not with the text; for soon after follows, that *the God of Israel shall give strength to his people*. Whereby we gather that he speaks of the protection of God's church. And he says *sanctuaries* in the plural number, as we have seen heretofore, because the tabernacle was divided into three parts. To be brief, he sets forth the ark of the covenant as a token of assurance to the faithful, that upon trust of this promise, *I dwell in the midst of you*, Exod. xxv. 8, and xxix. 45, they might rest quietly under the wings of God, and call upon him without fear. For by none other right did the people of Israel so far excel others that they might safely shroud themselves under God's protection, but because God by his gracious covenant had chosen them for his own peculiar possession. And it is to be noted, that he now applies to the welfare of the church that terrible strength whereof he made mention a little before.

PSALM LXIX.

This Psalm is akin to Psalm the twenty-second. For in the beginning David complains of the heinous wrongs and outrageous cruelty of his enemies; and yet he affirms himself not to be so much troubled but that he holds himself still patiently under God's protection, and continues maintaining himself in innocence. Nay rather, he says that all men were at deadly feud with him for his religion's sake, and because he had been firm in maintaining God's glory. And after he has complained the second time that he is oppressed by his enemies no less reproachfully than cruelly, he calls down upon them the punishment they have deserved. In the end, triumphing as though he had gotten the upper hand, he promises God a solemn sacrifice of praise.

[To the chanter upon David's *Sosanim*.]

2 Save me, O God; for the waters are entered in unto my soul.

3 I stick fast in the deep mire, where there is no footing: I am come into the depth of the waters, and the stream of the water runneth over me.

4 I am weary of crying; my throat is become hoarse; and mine eyes are waxed dim with looking unto my God.

5 They that hate me without cause be more in number than the hairs of my head: they are increased that seek to destroy me, *even* my lying adversaries: then restored I the things that I took not.

6 Lord, thou knowest my foolishness; and my faults are not hid from thee.

Upon Sosanim.] Concerning the word *Sosanim*, I have spoken heretofore. As in a thing uncertain and obscure, I willingly subscribe to the conjecture of those that think it was the beginning of some song, but if any man had rather take it for some instrument of music I will not strive with him. But frivolous is the surmise of them that think this Psalm was made in the spring of the year, at what time lilies begin to blossom. Moreover, before we proceed any further, it is to be noted, that David wrote this Psalm, not so much in his own behalf, as in the person of the whole church, because he bare the image of the head of it, according as it will better appear by the sequel. And it is a

thing especially to be noted, that we may give the better heed to this glass, in which is set before our face the common state of all the godly. Nevertheless it seems to me likely that David has comprehended not one kind of persecution only, but whatsoever adversity he had endured many years.

2 *Save me, O God, &c.*] Under the figure of waters he shews that through extreme miseries he was brought even unto despair; and yet we know he was not a delicate person, nor one that had a woman's heart, inasmuch as he overcame horrible temptations with incredible courage. Whereby we gather with what anguish he was distressed at that time. In my opinion it is but a stupid conjecture, that some take the *soul*, for *life*. I think rather that it betokens the heart; for although a man fall into a deep pond, yet may he keep out the water for awhile by stopping his mouth and his nostrils, but yet at length, because we cannot live without breathing, suffocation will compel him to let in the water, so that it shall penetrate even to the heart. And this is David's meaning by this metaphor, not only that he was overwhelmed with water, but also that he sucked it in. Afterwards he compares his afflictions to deep mud, where there is more danger; for if a man may have sure footing upon a solid bottom, he may raise himself up, according as we see many rise up above the waters with force, but he that sticks in the mud perishes. Further, he adds other circumstances also, that *he was overflowed of the stream of waters*, by which expression he means that he was buffeted with great violence.

4 *I am weary of crying, &c.*] It was an example of rare and wonderful patience, to seek God in so desperate a case. And David complains that he had tired himself with crying out to no purpose, even till he was hoarse. By which word he meant not any ceasing, as though he abandoned his earnestness in praying, when he saw it profited him not; but rather he describes unwearied perseverance, as it may well be gathered by *his hoarse throat* and *failing eyes*. Surely, he neither shrieked out before men to work upon them, neither was this hoarseness contracted in one day. We see therefore that howsoever his bodily senses failed him, yet was not the force of faith at all extinguished in him. Considering then that David has spoken as it were out of the mouth of Christ, and as it were out of the mouth of all the godly, so far as they are Christ's members, we must not think it against reason if at any time we are overwhelmed with death, and there appear no spark of life. Nay rather, let us learn to put ourselves in readiness, and to bethink us of it betimes, while God spareth us, that even in the deepest

whirlpools of adversities faith may hold us up, or rather lift us up unto God; according as by the record of Paul, Rom. viii. 39, there is no height, or depth, that ought to separate us from the immeasurable love of him who swalloweth up all depths, yea and hell itself.

5 *They that hate me, &c.*] Now he expresses, without figure, that which he had said metaphorically as well of the mire as of the violent flowing of the waters. For, as there pressed so great a multitude of enemies upon him, he had good cause to be afraid of innumerable deaths. Neither is it hyperbolical to say they were more than the hairs of his head, considering how he was hated and detested of the whole realm; insomuch that all men were persuaded that he was a wicked traitor to God and his country. Again, we know by the holy histories with how many and how strong armies Saul pursued him. He expresses a deadly hatred in saying that they seek his destruction, because they would have him cut up; and yet he avouches that he was persecuted without a cause. For the word הַנֶּם, which they translate *for nothing*, implies as much as that they are eagerly impelled to do mischief, being by no means wronged, nor provoked by any misuseage. And therefore he calls his enemies שָׂקֵר, that is to say, *liars*; as having no cause to make war. Therefore, if we at any time are persecuted, we must, by his example, endeavour that the witness of a good conscience may uphold us, and that we may freely protest before God that our enemies are such without cause. And the harder it is for a man to inure himself to this self-control, so much the more behoves it us to labour to attain it. Now, the foolish effeminacy of those that think it an intolerable matter to be afflicted wrongfully, is well reprov'd by that celebrated answer of Socrates. For when his wife lamented in prison that he was condemned wrongfully, What then, said he, hadst thou rather I should have suffered for some offence? Also David adds not only that he was afflicted with wrongs, but also that he suffered revilings and reproaches as if he had been convicted of many crimes, which is bitterer to a true-hearted man than to suffer a hundred deaths. For many are to be found that will readily die, who are not able to endure shame. Furthermore, David says that not only his goods were taken away by robbers, but also that he himself was mangled like a thief and a robber. And surely, when his enemies spoiled him, they boasted themselves to be but as judges of a wicked fellow; yea, and we know they were honourably esteemed as judges. Wherefore we may learn, by this example, not only to prepare ourselves to bear damages and troubles, yea and death

itself, quietly, but also shame and reproach, if at any time it happen to us to be assailed with false accusations. Yea rather, seeing that Christ himself, the fountain of all righteousness and holiness, was not privileged from slanders, why should a similar fate dismay us, considering that it is the true test of virtue to abide steadfastly in the exercise of righteousness, although we receive so wrongful a reward from the world?

6 *O God, thou knowest, &c.*] Augustin labours in vain to find how this should apply to Christ; and at length he transfers to his members what could not be properly said of the head. For it is a kind of irony, in which David, being oppressed with the wrongful judgments of men, resigns himself to God, and calls upon him for vengeance. And it is of more force than if he had openly, and without figure, said that his innocence was known to God. For by this means he passes a biting censure upon his enemies, and, as it were, looks down in scorn from on high upon their railings; according also as Jeremiah speaks, xx. 7, *Thou hast beguiled me, O Lord, and I am beguiled*. Which place also is violently wrested by certain unlearned persons as though Jeremiah meant that he was deceived indeed, when he rather severely lashes his slanderers, because that in finding fault with him they offered reproach and blasphemy to God himself. So also, in this place, lest David should shrink under the perverse judgments of men, he makes God his judge. And because he is sure he stands upon clear ground, he makes no account of men's wrongful opinions. Truly it were to be wished that men also might approve our uprightness, and that not so much for our own sakes as for the edifying of our brethren. But when we have done our best to make ourselves acceptable before men, if they construe things to the worst, and misreport whatsoever is rightly done or said by us, we must maintain this greatness of soul, that being contented with the judgment of God alone, we despise the world and all false accusers. For it is not possible but they must often quail who are over-scrupulous about their good name. Let us always be ready to satisfy men; but, if we may not be heard, let us go forward as well through evil report as good report, like as Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 5, appeals fearlessly to the judgment of God, who shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness.

7 Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed in me. Let not them that seek thee be put to shame in me, O God of Israel.

8 For even for thy sake have I suffered reproach : shame hath covered my face.

9 I have been a stranger to my brethren, and am become an alien to my mother's children.

10 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up : and the railings of them that railed at thee are fallen upon me.

7 *Let not them that, &c.*] David declares that he is set forth for a pattern, from which all the godly may fetch matter of hope or despair. For although all the people abhorred him, yet there remained a few upright and unprejudiced witnesses of his innocence. But though they knew he was wrongfully charged, and that he leaned always on God's grace, and was not discouraged with any temptations, but stood steady in the following of godliness, yet could they gather nothing from the sad and calamitous result but that he lost his labour in serving God devoutly. For like as God, as often as he helpeth his servants, confirmeth his grace towards us with so many seals; even so it could not be but that the faithful must have been utterly disheartened if David had been forsaken in his uttermost necessity. The danger of this he now lays before God; not that God needeth any admonition, but because he giveth us leave to deal familiarly with him. The word *wait* is properly referred to hope, like as *to seek God* is referred to prayer. And this coupling of them teaches profitably that faith is not inactive, because it stirs us to seek God.

8 *For even for thy sake, &c.*] Now expresses he more evidently that it was but in dissimulation that he said his faults were not hid from God. Nay, he proceeds yet further, namely, that he is not only persecuted contrary to right and reason, but also that his cause is God's cause, because he had attempted nothing without God's commandment. For although Saul had other causes, or at least other pretences, yet as it is most certain that his envy of David grew out of God's calling, because he had anointed him king, he does rightly to avouch that he is wrongfully condemned by the verdicts of all men, not for any offence of his own, but because he had obeyed God. And hence the faithful draw no small comfort when they may protest that they have attempted nothing besides that which they are lawfully called to by God. Now, if the world be offended with us for confession of the faith, according as we see that the ungodly never play the madmen more fiercely than when they assault God's word and his religion, our confidence is doubled. In

the mean time, this passage warns us how portentous is the malice of men, who turn zeal for his glory into reproach. But well is it for us that he not only wipeth away the reproaches wherewith the wicked load us, but also ennobleth them, so that they surpass all the triumphs of the world. Also he enhances his complaint with this circumstance, that he was unkindly rejected by his own kinsmen and neighbours. Whereby also we are taught that God must be followed in preference to any consideration of flesh and blood, if for godliness sake we cannot escape the displeasure of our own brethren.

10 *For the zeal, &c.*] Although David's enemies professed that they meant nothing less than to lay a finger upon God's holy name, yet in reproving their false pretences he confirms that he stands in God's behalf, and shews the manner; namely, because he burns with a zeal towards the church of God. Howbeit, he not only treats of the cause, but also says that although he be never so despitefully dealt withal, yet as it were forgetting himself, he puts on a holy affection of maintaining the church together with the glory of God. That this may the better appear, it is to be noted that although all of them boast in words that they leave to God his own glory, yet when it comes to the law, which is the rule of godly life, they do but trifle with God, and not so only, but also they furiously assault him in his word, as though his will were to be worshipped but in the air only, and had not rather set himself up a throne among men, to govern them from thence. Therefore David here places the church in God's room, not to yield to the church what is proper to God, but to shew how God's name is pretended in vain, where the true rule of godliness is shaken off, whereof the church is the faithful keeper. Besides, David had to deal with a counterfeit and bastard people of God: for all Saul's sect vaunted themselves of the title of the church, and proclaimed that David was but an apostate, or rotten member. So little is David discouraged with this unworthy dealing, that he willingly sustains all assaults for the defence of the true church. In the mean time, he denies that he is moved with their railings at him personally, because that, laying aside concern for himself, he is disquieted and sorry only for the oppression of the church, nay rather burns with anguish, and is consumed with the vehemence of his grief. To the same pertains the second member, for he says he has nothing separate from God. Some take it otherwise; namely, that the ungodly, on purpose to spite David, made their assaults against God, and so stung the holy man indirectly with their blasphemies, because they

knew nothing would be more grievous to him to bear. But this interpretation is too forced, like as this other also, that David made no less supplication as often as he heard God's name reproachfully rent, than if he had been guilty himself of high treason. I therefore hold me still to that which I have said already; namely, that David forgot himself, and that what grief soever he felt proceeded from the holy zeal wherewith he burned when he saw God's sacred name abused with shameful reproaches. By which example we are taught, that whereas we are by nature too tender and nice in bearing reproach, we must change this untoward disposition so that the reproaches which redound against God may grieve us more than our own. For in this behalf it behoves us to chafe and storm, yea and to thunder, but swallow down our own reproaches quietly; for till such time as we shall have learned to neglect our own fame, the true fervour of zeal to contend for the maintenance of God's glory will never be kindled in us. Moreover, as David bare the person of the whole church, whatsoever he avouches of himself must needs be fulfilled in the chief head. And therefore it is no marvel though the evangelists apply this place to Christ: John, ii. 17. In like respect also Paul, Rom. xv. 3, 5, 6, where he exhorts the faithful to follow the steps of Christ, extends the second member to them all, in which place also he gives us to understand what a large scope this doctrine hath; namely, that bending themselves wholly to God's glory, they should in all their sayings and doings endeavour to preserve the same unimpaired, and advisedly beware that it be not defaced by their fault. Now, seeing that Christ, in whom shineth forth the full majesty of God, did not refuse to expose himself to all reproaches for the maintenance of his Father's glory, how foul a shame will it be for us to shrink from the same lot?

11 And I wept, my soul *was* in fasting, and that was laid to me as a reproach.

12 I arrayed me also in sackcloth: and they made a scoffing at me for it.

13 They that sit in the gate make tales of me; and they that drink strong drink make songs of me.

14 But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Lord; *there will be* a time of thy good pleasure, O God: in the multitude of thy mercy answer thou me in the truth of thy salvation.

11 *And I wept, &c.*] Here, by the signs or effects, he proves himself to have sought God's glory with a pure and well-regulated zeal; namely, because he boiled not over with intemperateness of the flesh, but rather chose God to be witness of his sorrow, by submitting himself humbly. Whereby the inflexible stubbornness of his enemies is the more convinced. Often it comes to pass, that such as set themselves stoutly in defence of God's glory, more provoke the ungodly, and make them the fiercer, because they strive with them contentiously, and without meekness. But David avouches here that his zeal was so tempered that it ought to have softened even a steely hardness. Howbeit, he shews by this circumstance how sore he was oppressed with the frowardness of his enemies, insomuch that he had not liberty to open once his lips, nor any other resource than to defend God's case with tears and mourning. For, as we know, he was abridged of liberty to speak; or rather, his talk would have been rejected as the words of a condemned person. Wherefore it was a proof of the greater constancy, not to cease from his zeal, nor to leave that voluntary sorrow of his which he had taken upon him for godliness sake. He says, therefore, that *he wept, and that his soul was in fasting, and that he was clad in sackcloth*, which were tokens of mourning among the Jews. And whereas all these things were by them turned into mockery and scoffing, it follows that they were carried away with the fury of devils. And it becomes us to be guarded with this example, lest in these days the same stubbornness, by which the enemies of the Gospel shew themselves to be fiends rather than men, may discourage us. In the mean time we must beware that we put not oil upon the fire; but rather follow the steps of David and Lot, who, though they might not rebuke the wicked, yet sorrowed in their own hearts. Nay rather, even when the ungodly shall be constrained to hear us, then shall mildness and humility be the best seasoning of holy zeal. They that will have David to have sorrowed for the guilt of his enemies, confirm their opinion with this, that he put on sackcloth. But I take it more simply, that when he saw things so confused he fell to mourning of his own accord, to testify that nothing was more bitter to him than to see God's holy name exposed to contumely.

13 *They that sit in the gate.*] If he had been vexed only by vulgar buffoons and the refuse of the people, it had been the more tolerable, for it is no marvel that low persons, who have no regard for honesty, prated and railed without shame. But when the very judges, forgetting their own gravity, abandoned themselves to the same frowardness, the indig-

nity was greatly increased. Therefore David complains expressly that he was a by-word with the very nobles. For whereas some take *them that sit in the gate* to be meant of the whole people, first, it is flat, and, secondly, far from the words of David: for, although men of all degrees assembled in the gate, yet none sat but the judges. And that he confirms by the second part of the verse; for by *them that drink strong drink*, doubtless he denotes the elders that excelled in wealth and dignity. Verily it was an exceeding sore grief, that not only the common herd troubled the holy man, but that the very presidents of justice and the chief of the church were ringleaders to others. And forasmuch as the same thing happens in our days, not without cause hath the Holy Ghost set this example before our eyes. In popedom, according as each man excels in honour, that he may shew himself a stout maintainer of the catholic faith, so much the more frowardly does he rage against the Gospel, and the preachers of the same. Nay rather, it is a disease that reigns wellnigh in all princes, because they place not their excellence in virtue, but in unbridled license. As for the good servants of Christ, what account make they of them? Truly, it is one of their cares, and not the least of them, to gird at them scoffingly with their taunts, not only at their tables, but also on their thrones, that they may renounce their faith. Generally also they jest at all the godly, and complacently descant on their simplicity, as though they were fools, to weary and pine themselves so sore for godly religion's sake.

14 *But as me, &c.*] It was a mark of rare virtue, that not even that hard usage was able to shock the mind of David so as to make him quail. Herewith also he teaches, with what remedy he fortified himself against that sore stumblingblock. For when the wicked brought their raillery to bear against him, as it were engines of war to batter his faith, he says he poured out prayer, wherewith to repulse all their assaults. No doubt he was constrained to be mute among men. Being therefore shut out from the world, he turns himself to God. Now also, in like manner, although the faithful can make no progress with the wicked, yet shall they stand victorious, if they compose and gather in themselves to pray unto God. The sum is, that when David, having tried all ways, saw his labour was in vain, he left men, and dealt with God only. . That which follows, namely, *the time of thy good pleasure, O God*, is otherwise expounded by many interpreters; that is, they read it in one sentence, thus; *I prayed unto God in the time of his good pleasure*; according to the place of Isaiah, lv. 6, *Call upon him while*

he is near at hand. Others resolve it thus, *I wished that the time of God's good pleasure might come, and that he would begin to be merciful to me.* But I think rather that David reports what comfort he conceived at that time, because he thought thus with himself: Although it be now a time of trouble, wherein I seem to profit nought by praying, yet shall God's good pleasure have its turn also. So also Habakkuk, ii. 1, says he will stand upon the watchtower. After the same manner, Is. viii. 17, and Jer. xiv. 22, *I will wait upon the Lord, who hath hidden his face from Jacob.* For the only way for us to vanquish is when hope shines to us in darkness, and the waiting for God's good pleasure sustains us. After David has thus underpropped his own perseverance, by and by, gathering boldness again from the nature of God, he adds, *Answer me in the multitude of thy goodness.* And to goodness he joins truth of salvation; as if he should say that God's mercy is proved by undeniable effect, when he succoureth his servants in despair. And from hence flowed his praying, that drawing back his thoughts to God, lest he might faint by reason of his buffetings by the ungodly, he was persuaded that the darkness should one day be chased away, and a serene and lightsome time of God's good pleasure succeed.

15 Pluck me out of the mire, that I be not drowned: let me be delivered from mine adversaries, and from the deep waters.

16 Let not the streams of water overflow me, and let not the deep swallow me, and let not the pit shut his mouth upon me.

17 Answer me, O Lord; for thy mercy is good: in the multitude of thy compassions look back unto me.

18 And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble; make haste, answer me.

19 Come near to my soul, ransom it; deliver me for mine adversaries' sakes.

15 *Pluck me, &c.*] He repeats the same similitude that he had used before, but after a diverse manner. He had said erewhile that he was drowned, and now he desires that he may not be drowned. In short, the things he had complained of as having happened to him, now he prays may not happen. But this contrariety is easily done away with, because in the beginning he spake according to his own

feeling and experience; but now having an eye to the issue, he lives in the midst of death, through the hope of deliverance. And that is expressed more clearly by the last member, *that the pit should not shut his mouth*; which implies as much as if he had said, Let not the hugeness of miseries overwhelm me, and swallow me up for sorrow. And his beseeching of God by his mercy and compassion, shews with what distress the holy prophet was straitened. For there is no doubt he endured a hard encounter, when he had no other defence but this. And truly it is a matter of great difficulty to believe that God is merciful when he is angry with us, and to be near us when he is withdrawn from us. Therefore David gathers what he may set against this distrust; and by calling upon God's mercies and great compassions, he shews that the cause why he hopes well is, that God is merciful. When he says, *look back to me*, it imports as much as if he had said, Make it to be seen in very deed that thou hast heard me; namely, by thy succouring of me. In the next verse also he does the same thing. And by repeating the same things oftentimes, he declares as well the bitterness of his grief as the earnestness of his zeal. He desires God not to hide his face; not because he is afraid of being rejected, but because it is impossible that disquietness of mind should not drive men hither and thither when they are in misery. And forasmuch as God calleth none to him but his servants, David avouches himself to be one of that number. For, as I have told you before, and must declare more at large hereafter, he boasts not of his services, thereby to claim anything of desert, but rather leans on the free election of God, saving that therewith he yields an assurance of his godliness, in that he had faithfully served God, by whom he was called.

19 *Come near to, &c.*] Although he were persuaded by faith that God was near to him, yet, according as we are wont to measure God's presence or absence by his working, David here, after the understanding of the flesh, complains that he is far off. For by the word *come near*, he means that God had no regard of his welfare; that is, as far as might be gathered by the very deed. Again; by calling God to come near to his life, which he seemed to forsake, he gives a notable proof of his faith; or rather, the more cruelly he is pressed, the more trusts he that God will be his deliverer. And as has been said heretofore, this must always be held as a principle; That as God resisteth the proud, James iv. 6, although he dissemble for a time, yet can it not otherwise be but he must at length suppress the haughtiness of them that obstinately resist him.

20 Thou knowest my reproach, and my confusion, and my shame : all mine adversaries are before thee.

21 Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness : and I looked for somebody to have pitied me, but there was none ; and for comforters, but I found none.

22 And they put gall into my meat ; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

20 *Thou knowest, &c.*] It is a confirmation of the last sentence : for whence comes it that the greater part are fainthearted, when they see the ungodly rush upon them furiously, and rage like a waterflood, but because they think that heaven is so overcast with clouds, that God can see nothing upon earth ; therefore here God's providence must succour us, that we doubt not but he will come to our rescue in season. For neither can he shut his eyes at our miseries, nor leave the outrageousness of the wicked unpunished, unless he should deny himself. David therefore leans on this comfort ; that God is privy to his grief, fear, sorrows, and cares : verily, because nothing is hid from the judge and governor of the world. Neither is he too wordy in repeating his shameful misuse. For it was needful for him to set sure guard against so grievous engines of temptations, which might have appalled the stoutest heart. Nothing is more bitter to men of an ingenuous and noble spirit than reproach ; but when the same is repeated, yea and there come many at once clustering one upon another, what singular strength have we need of, that we be not borne down with them : for despair creeps easily in, through weariness of long delay. Therefore, lest David might have sunk under the burden, he gathers that the manifold afflictions with which he is loaded are not unknown to God. As for the shames and reproaches, they will aptly be referred as well to the outward appearance, as to his feelings. For both it is well known, that he was everywhere had in derision, and also it could not be but that such scoffs must strike into him both shame and sorrow. With the same view he adds that his enemies are known unto God ; as if he should say, Lord, thou knowest how I am beset round about, as it were but one sheep among thousands of wolves.

21 *Reproach hath broken, &c.*] He expresses more evidently, not only that he was ashamed at the mournful spectacle of his desertion, but also that he had in a manner yielded to sorrow, because he lay so long in reproach. Whence we gather, that he overcame not without wrestling ;

and that the reason why he withstood the waves of temptations so firmly, was not that they touched not his heart, but because being sorely smitten, he made resistance with proportionate stoutness. He adds another circumstance; he was bereft of all offices of humanity, so that there was not any man that was sorry for him, or to whom he might disburden himself of his grief. For some take the word נָר to signify *to tell* or *declare*, because it is some relief to us to pour out our complaints to our friends. In thiswise seeks he mercy at God's hand, because he was bereft of all worldly helps and comforts. Afterwards he makes mention again, that his enemies leave no stone unturned to carry their cruelty to the utmost. Now although they are metaphorical expressions to say, that they mingle gall or poison with his meat, and vinegar with his drink; like as in Jeremiah, ix. 15, to put wood into bread; yet not without reason does John, xix. 29, record that this scripture was fulfilled, when the soldiers gave Christ vinegar to drink upon the cross; because whatsoever cruelty the reprobates execute upon the members of Christ, must needs be represented by a visible token in Christ himself; like as also, in Psalm xxii. 19, I said that at what time the soldiers parted Christ's garments among them, it was not out of season to cite this verse, *They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots*; although David means, figuratively, that he himself was robbed, and his goods ransacked as if they had been a prey. Nevertheless, the original sense must be borne in mind; namely, that the holy prophet had no relief given him; in like manner as if a man who was otherwise miserably afflicted should also find his meat and drink marred with bitterness.

23 Let their table before them be a snare unto them: and the things *that should have been* their peace, a net.

24 Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see; and make their loins always to tremble.

25 Pour out thy wrath upon them, and let the rage of thy displeasure catch hold of them.

26 Let their palace be void; and let none dwell in their tents.

27 For they have persecuted him whom thou hast smitten; and they have added to the sorrow of them whom thou hast wounded.

28 Add wickedness to their wickedness; and let them not enter into thy righteousness.

29 Let them be wiped out of the book of the living, and let them not be written among the righteous.

30 As for me, *when* I am poor and in heaviness, thy help shall set me up on high.

23 *Let their table, &c.*] There follow dire imprecations in which we must bear in mind what I have said heretofore; that is, that David did not give himself a loose rein to pour out his choler, according as most men intemperately give way to their own humour when they are wronged; but by the guiding of the Holy Ghost called upon God for just judgment against the reprobates; and again, that he pleaded not in his own private cause, but was moved with a holy zeal for God's glory to cite the wicked to his judgment-seat. Whereby also it came to pass, that he was not carried away by violence of passion, as they are that are desirous to avenge themselves. Then seeing that the spirit of wisdom, uprightness, and moderation, put these cursings into David's heart, there is no cause why his example should be pretended by such as either pour forth their wrath upon any man, or else are improperly carried away by impatience to revenge, so that they neither respect the right end, nor keep measure. For there needs wisdom to discern the reprobates from such as are yet curable; uprightness, that no man confine himself to his own objects exclusively; and moderation, to settle men's minds to calm endurance. Forasmuch, then, as these three things were doubtless in David, whosoever hath a mind to follow him aright; first, he must not rashly proceed with blind rage to cursing; secondly, he must repress the turbulent passions of his mind; and thirdly, he must not have his thoughts confined exclusively to himself, but must employ his desires and affections to the seeking of God's glory: finally, that we may be true followers of David, first, we must put upon us the person of Christ, lest he turn the same saying upon us at this day, which he objected against his disciples in old time, *ye know not of what spirit ye be*, Luke ix. 55. Furthermore, as David had complained that his enemies had put gall into his meat, now he prays that their table may be made a snare unto them; and that the things that are for their peace may become a net to them; wishing metaphorically by these words, that whatsoever things were ordained for their life, welfare, and con-

venience, God would turn to their destruction. Whereby we gather that like as while we are in God's favour the things that naturally and of themselves are hurtful, are furtherances to our welfare; so when he is angry with us, whatsoever things were for our profit, they are cursed, and become so many causes of our destruction. And this vengeance of God ought to strike into us no small fear, when the Holy Ghost avoucheth that all the helps of this life are deadly to the reprobates, Tit. i. 15, so that the very sun which carries healing in his wings, Mal. iv. 2, breathes but a pestiferous exhalation for them.

24 *Let their eyes, &c.*] Because he notes chiefly two powers of the body in this place, I willingly embrace the opinion of those who will have the meaning to be this; Lord, bereave them of reason and understanding, and also enfeeble their strength that they may be utterly unprofitable to do anything. For we know that nothing can be done aright, unless the light of counsel go before it, and at the same time there be added power to execute. Now, seeing that this curse hangs over the heads of the enemies of the church, there is no cause why the malice or fury of the ungodly should make us afraid; because it is in God's hand to strike them suddenly with blindness, so that they shall see nothing, and to break their loins, so that they shall lie confounded.

25 *Pour out, &c.*] It is no marvel that David dwells somewhat long upon these imprecations: for we know that the furious enemies of the church, whom he meant to put in fear, are not easily moved. Therefore, that they might cease from their petulance, he rises up against them the more vehemently. Howbeit, David had an eye chiefly to the faithful, who being oppressed with miseries, have no other stay to lean on, but that they hear at God's mouth what horrible vengeance is prepared for their enemies, if they be reprobate. For David would have wished the curable to be corrected with chastisements, but he dooms the incurable to their due destruction, so as they might not escape the punishment that was appointed for them, and which they had deserved. In the next verse he proceeds further; namely, that God should shed forth his wrath to their posterity, according as it is no new thing for the wickedness of the father to be thrown back into the bosom of the children. For like as David conceived these imprecations by the instinct of the Spirit, so also took he them out of the very law, Exod. xx. 50, where God avoucheth that he will punish the wicked despisers, even to the third and fourth

generation. And by this means he wishes the memorial of them to be cursed, so that God should not spare them even when they are dead.

27 *For they have, &c.*] He brings forth their fault that it may appear that they are most worthy of such sore punishments. Some expound this verse in thiswise; Lord, thy plagues could not content them, but they have shewed cruelty to the wretched man that was already wounded with thy hand. And surely, inasmuch as humanity bids us to succour the afflicted, whosoever treads down the oppressed, betrays himself to be of brutal cruelty. Others censure this exposition, whether with sufficient reason or no, I know not; saying that David was not peculiarly stricken by God's hand, because through the whole Psalm he complains of the violent rage of his enemies. Therefore they devise a subtle interpretation, as if David should say his enemies had wickedly feigned themselves to have just cause against him, as they gloried that they were God's ministers, to take punishment of him as of a wicked person; according as the ungodly most commonly, under this pretence, think it lawful for them to do what they list with impunity to such as are in misery; like as also it is said in another place, *Come, let us persecute him; for God hath forsaken him, &c.*, Psalm lxxi. 11. But I rather think that he is termed *smitten*, whom God's will is to chastise as one of his children, so that there might be some token of his fatherly love imprinted in the very chastisement. And he names them the *wounded of God* almost in the same sense that Isaiah, xxvi. 29, calls them the *dead of God*; namely, who, even in death itself, abode under the custody of God. For this cannot be extended to all men alike, but pertains only to the faithful, whose obedience God trieth by the cross. If the ungodly take therefrom occasion of greater license, it is no marvel though they purchase more grievous damnation. For upon the view of such examples, it would have become them to reason thus with themselves; *If this be done in the green tree, what then shall be done in the dry?* Luke xiii. 31. But now seeing they harden themselves more and more, it appears that their haughty behaviour against the children of God proceeds from contempt and hatred of godliness. The word יספּרוּ, which is wont to be translated, *they shall declare*, I interpret otherwise: for properly it signifies to number, and therefore it will fitly be referred to increasing; that is to say, that they heaped up his sorrow or grief to the top as full as it could hold, by adding to his miseries.

28 *Add wickedness to their, &c.*] Forasmuch as the word און signifies now and then as well *blame*, as also *wickedness*;

it is so translated by some in this place, that God should heap punishments upon punishments. Others extend it yet further, that wicked men should punish them for their wickedness. But it appears well enough by the second member that David prays the same thing that is admitted in manner by common sense; that is, that God, taking his Spirit altogether from the ungodly, should give them over to a reprobate mind, so that they should never seek to amend. For whereas some interpret *to come into righteousness*, to *be acquit*, it seems rather to want the spirit which the expression implies. Therefore the words must be expounded thus: Let their wickedness increase more and more, and let them abhor amendment, that it may appear how utterly they are estranged from God. And forasmuch as this form of speech is familiar to the scripture, and to be met with everywhere, we must not think it harsh; and to wrest it, for avoiding of absurdity, as some do, is ridiculous. They expound it, that God addeth sins to sins, by permitting them: and they pretend that it is a phrase of the Hebrew tongue, which no Hebrew will allow. Neither need there any such quibbles to excuse God, because it is enough for us that when God blindeth the reprobates, he hath just cause so to do, so that it is to no purpose for men to murmur and wrangle with him, as though they did not sin but by his impulse. For although the causes of blinding sometimes lie hid in the secret purpose of God, yet does every man's own conscience reprove him, and it is our duty to honour and commend with reverence the mysteries of God that surpass our understanding. For it is not without cause said, *that God's judgments are a bottomless depth*, Psalm xxxvi. 7. Certainly, with regard to this passage, it were more than preposterous to involve God in part of the blame, when he executeth his judgments. The effect is, that the ungodly are drowned in the deep gulf of wickedness by the just vengeance of God, that they may never return to a sound understanding, *so that he that is filthy, shall be more filthy still*, Rev. xxii. 11. Nevertheless, I expound not God's *righteousness* actively, to be the righteousness which he bestoweth upon his children by begetting them anew with his Spirit; but the holiness of life, which is approved by him.

29 *Let them be wiped, &c.*] This is the last imprecation, and the most dreadful of all; which nevertheless ever follows the impenitence and obstinate hardihood of which he spoke just now. Therefore, after he has taken from them the hope of amendment, he denounces also eternal destruction unto them. For needs must they perish, whosoever are not found written in the book of life. It is indeed an im-

proper manner of speech, but yet such a one as is not unsuited to our limited capacity, inasmuch as the book of life is nothing else than the eternal purpose of God, whereby he hath predestinated his children to salvation. Sure it is, that nothing can be changed in it. Again, we know that those who are adopted to the hope of salvation were written before the creation of the world: Eph. i. 4. But as God's eternal election is incomprehensible in respect of man's understanding, they are said *to be written* whom God reckons among his people by open and evident signs. So again in the same manner, they are *wiped out* whom God openly rejecteth and banisheth out of his church. Because then David desires to have God's vengeance manifested, he does well to accommodate the reprobation of his enemies to our understanding; as if he should say, O God, reckon them not in the number or ranks of thy people, nor let them be gathered together with thy church; but rather, by destroying them, shew that thou hast cast them off; and although they have a place among the faithful for a time, yet at length cut them off, that it may be seen that they are aliens, though they were mingled with thy household. According also as says Ezekiel, xiii. 9, *Let them not be found in the secret register of my people.* Meanwhile that continues true which is spoken in 1 John, ii. 19, that none of them who were the true children of God, do ever fall away. But as the hypocrites presumptuously boast themselves to be chief in the church, the casting of them off is aptly expressed by this similitude, when the Holy Ghost says, they are wiped out of the book of life. Moreover, it is to be noted, that in the second member all the elect of God are called *righteous*, because, as Paul says, 1 Thess. iv. 7, *We are not called to uncleanness, but to holiness, that every man should possess his vessel in honour*, 1 Thess. iv. 4. And well known is that climax which Paul uses, Rom. viii. 30; *Whom he hath chosen, them hath he called; and whom he hath called, them doth he justify, &c.*

30 *As for me, when I, &c.*] By this verse it appears better, how far David was from the swelling and raging zeal of those who break out into acts of vengeance with ungovernable fury. For there is no doubt but he offers himself here to God with the sacrifice of a broken and lowly heart, that by this meekness he may win himself favour. Therefore adds he immediately after, *thy help shall set me up on high.* Verily, they that by their own turbulent spirit are impelled to vengeance, are so far from being humbled, that they lift up themselves too much. But here is asserted a mutual relation between the sorrow wherewith he lay oppressed,

and God's help, by which he looked to be raised up. By the way, he warrants that that shall be a cause of his welfare which others were in the habit of perverting into an occasion of despair. Also the sentence might be expounded adversatively, thus; Although I now mourn in heaviness, yet shall thy help lift me up. But I feel assured that David alleges his own affliction to procure himself mercy. And he not only says that he shall be raised up, but he purposely names *setting up on high*; alluding to fortresses set upon high places, for so does the word שׁוּב signify properly.

31 I will praise the name of God in a song, and I will magnify him in praise.

32 And this will please the Lord more than a young bullock that beareth horns and hoofs.

33 The afflicted have seen it, and they that seek God shall be glad of it: and your heart shall live.

34 For the Lord hath hearkened to the afflicted, and hath not despised his prisoners.

31 *I will praise thee, &c.*] Here now he rises up cheerfully, and sings the triumph of victory, upon assured hope of deliverance. For although he penned this Psalm after he was rid of all dangers, yet is it certain that he had the same things in his mind when he was in anxious trepidation, because by assured faith he took hold of grace, though as yet it was hidden in hope. And God is said to be *magnified with our praises*, not that his immeasurable glory is aught increased, but because his name is exalted among men. Furthermore, that David may the better confirm himself, he avouches that the thanksgiving which he is about to render to God, shall be a sacrifice of good and sweet savour. For there can no sharper spur be put to thankfulness, than when it is certain that this office of devotion does so highly please God; even as he requireth no other recompense for all the benefits that he bestoweth upon us, but that we should praise his name. So much the less excusable therefore is the churlishness of those who suppress his praises in silence or forgetfulness. Now although David neither omitted nor thought lightly of the outward sacrifices which the law commanded, yet did he worthily prefer the spiritual service, which was the end of all the ceremonies. Of which matter I have treated more at large in Psalm l. 8, and 14. By the way we must mark David's meekness, that although he were mounted up to be a pattern of heavenly things, yet he dis-

dained not to humble himself for the common profit of the church, as though he had been but one of the common sort; that he might learn that by the figures of the Law, which afterwards was manifested more plainly in the Gospel; namely, that the praises of God, in so far as they proceed out of our mouth, are unclean, until they be sanctified by Christ. But now is their superstition more than blockish, who call back into use the outward solemnity of ceremonies that are abolished by the sacrifice of Christ's death, and think that God is rightly pacified when they have wearied themselves with doing nothing; which is nothing else than with thick veils to cover this true service of thanksgiving, which David doubts not to prefer far before the ceremonies appointed by God. By the *young bullock* is meant a choice one, as if he should say there is no sacrifice so fat or costly that it pleaseth God so well as thanksgiving.

33 *The afflicted have, &c.*] He teaches that the fruit of his deliverance shall extend to others as well as to himself, like as we have seen in Psalm xxii. 23, and 26, and in many other places. And this does he, partly to commend God's grace among the faithful, and partly that God himself should be the readier to help him. Moreover, he means that the faithful shall rejoice at this sight, not only for brotherly friendship's sake, but because that in the person of one man, there shall be given a pledge of help to all men; in which respect also he terms them *afflicted*. Whosoever, says he, seek God, although they be afflicted with miseries, yet shall they take heart by my example. For these two things must be read together, because the sense would not cohere unless it were so, that David's example should be a cause of gladness to all the devout worshippers of God, when they shall seek remedy of their afflictions. And he does rightly to join the desire of seeking God with affliction, because all men profit not so under God's rod, that they seek help at his hand with unfeigned affection of faith. In the last part of the verse there is a changing of the person, which however obscures not the sense; yea rather this apostrophe, as though the subject were presented to the senses, expresses more effectually what David meant. For in speaking to those by name that lay like dead men because they were oppressed with miseries, he sets a kind of image of the resurrection before their eyes; as if he should say, Unto you, O dead, shall new vigour be restored. Not that faith dies in the children of God until the example of others' deliverance quicken it into life again, but because the light that was quenched is kindled anew, so that after a sort it rises to life again. Immediately after he defines the manner how; namely, that

being persuaded that there was a general assurance of God's grace exhibited to them all in David, they shall confidently gather that the helpless are regarded, and the prisoners are not despised; for we see them take that which was done to one just as if God had shewn by very deed that he will be at hand to all that be in adversity, to succour them.

35 Let the heavens, and the earth, and the seas, praise him, and whatsoever creepeth in them.

36 For God shall preserve Sion, and build up the cities of Judah; and they shall dwell there, and hold it by inheritance.

37 And the seed of his servants shall possess it for an heritage; and they that love his name shall dwell in it.

35 *Let the heavens, &c.*] Hereby one may easily gather that which I touched upon just now; namely, that in this Psalm David was the spokesman of the whole church: for now he transfers to it whatsoever he had spoken peculiarly of himself. And whereas he exhorts the senseless elements to praise God, by this hyperbolical manner of speech he shews that we are not earnestly enough minded to the setting forth of God's praises, the immeasurableness whereof overpasses the whole world, unless we mount above our own understandings. But what chiefly kindled this earnestness in David's heart was the preservation of the church. And no doubt by the spirit of prophecy he comprehended all that time in which it was God's will that the kingdom and priesthood should continue among the ancient people. Notwithstanding he begins at that restoration which shone by his work and hand suddenly after Saul's death, at what time a mournful havock menaced as well the utter destruction of God's religion as the devastation of the land. And first he says that Sion shall be preserved, because God will defend the place where he would be called upon, and will not suffer the worship to be put away which he himself had appointed. Afterwards, from the ark of the covenant and the sanctuary, he extends God's blessing to the whole land, because the welfare of the realm was founded upon religion. Nevertheless he means that this change to better shall not be transient, but that the people shall always be in good case through the steady and enduring protection of God. And therefore he teaches that by the auspicious commencement of his reign was truly ratified that which God had promised so often in his law; namely, that they should

inherit that land for ever. For quiet continuance is matched against sojourning for a time ; as if he should say, that now, by setting up the holy throne, the time was come that the children of Abraham should enjoy their promised quietness without fear of migrating. In the last verse he extends it to the continual succession of ages, that the father should deliver the possession to their children, and the children to their offspring, from hand to hand. For the substantial perpetuity of all good things rests upon Christ, of whom the prophet David was a figure. Nevertheless, by the way he gives us to understand that none shall inherit the land but such as are the lawful children of Abraham. For it was needful that all cause of overweening should be taken away from the hypocrites, who, presuming upon the only original of their flock, wrongfully boasted that the land was theirs by right of inheritance, though they were revolted from the faith of their forefathers. Now although that land were given to the chosen people to possess it till the coming of Christ, yet let us bear in mind that it was but a token of the heavenly inheritance, and therefore that what is written here concerning the protection of the church, is more truly and substantially fulfilled at this day, because it is not to be feared that the building of the spiritual temple shall decay, in which the heavenly power of God hath appeared.

PSALM LXX.

Forasmuch as this Psalm is nothing but a portion of the fortieth Psalm, perhaps the title, "To call to remembrance," expresses that because David, having taken these five verses out of that other place, has applied them to some special use : I will only repeat the words here ; let the interpretation be fetched from its proper place.

[*To David's chanter, "To call to remembrance."*]

2 O God, make speed to deliver me ; O Lord, make haste to help me.

3 Let them be ashamed and put to confusion that seek my life : let them be driven back, and put to shame, that wish me evil.

4 Let them be destroyed in reward of their shame, that say to me, Aha, aha !

5 Let them all be glad and rejoice in thee, that

seek thee : and let them that love thy salvation say,
God be praised evermore.

6 I truly am poor and needy ; O God, make haste
to me : thou art my help and my deliverer : make
thou no tarryance, O Lord.

PSALM LXXI.

After that David had spoken somewhat of his own trust in God, he partly calls upon him for deliverance, and partly complains of the pride of his enemies : and partly for the strengthening of his faith, prepares and addresses himself to testify his thankfulness.

1 In thee, O Lord, do I trust ; let me not be
ashamed for ever.

2 Rescue me in thy righteousness, and deliver me :
bow down thine ear unto me, and save me.

3 Be thou unto me a fortress of strength, for me
to enter into at all times : thou hast given command-
ment to save me ; for thou art my tower and my bul-
wark.

4 My God, deliver me from the hand of the un-
godly, from the hand of the wicked and violent
man.

1 *In thee, O Lord, &c.*] They think that this Psalm was written upon Absalom's conspiracy, and the conjecture is probable, as David makes mention of his old age. Now, as faith only opens the gate for us when we are coming to God, that David may obtain his petition, he avouches, after his ordinary manner, that he makes not feigned prayers, but flees to God in good earnest ; because he is assured, for a certainty, that his salvation is laid up in his hand. For he that is carried about hither and thither, and divides his hope diversely, or disputes fearfully with himself, or refuses God's help stubbornly, or frets and chafes impatiently, is unworthy of God's assistance. The particule לעולם in the end of the verse admits a twofold sense, according as I have taught in Psalm xxxi. 2. For either there is an implied antithesis between present miseries, and the joyful end which David hoped for ; as if he had said, Lord, now I lie as one confounded, but thou shalt cause me to be delivered one time or other : or else, *not to be ashamed for ever*, imports as much as to be never ashamed. And as the resi-

due agrees for the most part with the beginning of Psalm xxxi., what I purposely omit here let the reader's desire to save from weariness fetch from thence. In this portion, *for me to enter into, or come unto at all times*, which is not inserted there, David requests briefly to have God's help in such readiness for him that he may have safe recourse thither as often as any danger shall be at hand. That is to say, Lord, be thou always ready to defend me, and as often as I flee to thee, meet me favourably by the way. That which follows, *Thou hast given commandment to save me*, some interpreters explain in the manner of wishing; as if David should request to be committed to the guardianship of the angels. But it is better to keep still the preter tense of the verb, so that he should hearten himself to hope well by reason of his former experiences. Also there is no need to restrain the word *commandment* to the angels: for although God use their service to defend his people, yet, as he hath in his hand innumerable ways of saving, I take it indefinitely that God, concerning the welfare of his servants, commandeth that which he hath decreed as often as he sheweth forth his favour openly by any sign, and executeth that which he hath determined with himself, sometimes by his only beck, sometimes by men, or else by other creatures. In the meanwhile, I doubt not but David's meaning is, that God is powerful enough of himself, although he call in no helps elsewhere; as if he should say God's only commandment is of sufficient ability to save us.

4 *My God, &c.*] Although the singular number be used here, yet he designates not one man alone; for it is likely that he comprehends the whole host of his enemies by whom he was assaulted. And I have told you, heretofore, how greatly it avails to the confidence of obtaining, that we be assured of our own integrity, so that we may freely complain before God that we are wrongfully and wickedly assaulted by our enemies. For it is not in anywise to be doubted but that God will take our cause in hand, who hath promised to become the advocate of such as are unjustly oppressed.

5 For thou art my longing, O Lord God: thou art my trust, even from my childhood.

6 Upon thee have I been stayed from *my mother's* womb: thou art the drawer of me out of my mother's bowels: my praise *shall be* always in thee.

7 I have been as a monster to the great men: but thou art my sure trust.

8 My mouth shall be filled with thy praise and with thy glory every day.

5 *For thou art my, &c.*] He repeats that which he had spoken a little before concerning his trust, unless perhaps any one would refer this sentence to the matter, rather than to the affection of his heart; as if he should say that by God's benefits he had matter of hope ministered to him. And certainly he reports not here simply that he hoped in God, but he joins experience also thereto, and confesses that even when he was but yet a child he had shewn him proofs of God's grace, whereby he might learn there is no trust anywhere but in God. And although he denotes the real cause of faith, so to speak, from the affection itself, yet one may gather thereby how effectual the remembrance of God's benefits was to nourish his hope. With this verse matches also the next, save that David proceeds further. For he commends not only the benefits which he had had experience of from a child, but also which had been bestowed upon him before he was born into the world. A nearly similar confession is in Psalm xxii. 10, by which is commended God's wonderful working and inestimable goodness in the generation of men, the course whereof were utterly incredible, but that we are familiar with it. For if we wonder at the flood, when Moses declares, Gen. viii. 13, that Noah and his household lived ten months in a foul dung heap, when he could not draw the breath of life, why should we not marvel as much that the child lives close shut up within the mother's womb, in such uncleanness as would suffocate the strongest man in half an hour? But verily thus do God's miracles grow out of estimation with us by familiarity. Not without cause, therefore, does the Spirit chastise this unthankfulness, commending God's so notable grace in our birth and generation. Moreover, when we come to be born into the world, although the mother do her duty, and the midwife be by her, and many other put to their help, yet unless God, in a manner putting his hand under us, should receive us into his bosom, what would become of us, or what hope were there of the continuance of life? Nay rather, the coming out of our mother's womb should be an entrance into a thousand deaths. And therefore not without cause is God called *the drawer of us out of our mother's womb*. Whereunto also answers the closing of the verse, *my praise shall always be in thee*. For he means that he had cause to praise God given unto him without ceasing.

7 *I have been as a monster, &c.*] Now passes he to complaint; namely, that he was everywhere abhorred by reason of the great miseries wherewith he was oppressed. And although, to seeming, there be some contrariety in these words, that he had always been adorned with God's benefits, and also accounted as a monster by reason of his miserable affliction, yet we draw from it a most profitable doctrine; namely, that the taste of God's goodness, which he had conceived, was not overwhelmed with any extent of adversities. Although therefore he saw himself abhorred, yet could not the remembrance of God's benefits, which was as a lamp in his heart to direct his faith, be quenched by any darkness. And by the term *monster* there is expressed no ordinary adversity. For unless he had been oppressed after some unaccustomed manner, such as were not ignorant of the miserable state of mankind would not have shrunk with horror at so unseemly an appearance. Therefore it was so much the more commendable a token of constancy, that he was not discouraged nor enfeebled with shame, but that the more he was rejected of the world the more he leaned upon God. For the sentence must be resolved adversatively; that although men abhorred him as a monster, yet he stood firmly by leaning upon God. If any man like to translate the word רבים, *many*, the sense will be, that David's miseries were commonly known and bruited abroad, as if he had been brought forth upon a stage, and set for all the people to gaze upon. Still, in my judgment, it will agree better to understand it *of great men*, or *noble men*. And it is a grief that pierces even the stoutest hearts, yea and that not slightly, when they that seem to excel in wisdom and judgment, and such as are of authority, shudder at a wretched creature. Soon after, as though he had obtained his heart's desire, he adds a testimony of the thankfulness which he purposes to shew. And that he may arise the more readily to good hope, he promises that he will sing God's praises with a loud voice, and that not at one time only, but with unwearied perseverance.

9 Cast me not off in mine old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth me.

10 For mine enemies have said of me; and they that lay wait for my life have consulted together,

11 Saying, God hath forsaken him; follow upon him, and ye shall overtake him: for there is none to deliver him.

12 O God, be not far from me: my God, make haste to help me.

13 Let them be put to shame and fail of their purpose that are against my life: let them be covered with reproach and shame that seek my harm.

9 *Cast me not off, &c.*] Because he had just now reported that God had been the preserver of his life at his birth, and afterwards his foster-father in his childhood, yea and the maintainer of his welfare during the whole course of his life, now being spent with age he casts himself again into God's fatherly bosom; for the more our strength fails us, like as our very need drives us to seek God, so also must we hope in his forwardness to help us. The sum is; O Lord, which hast sustained me in the flower of my youth when I was fresh and lusty, forsake me not now when I am drooping and almost withered, but the more I have need of thy help, the more let my need move thee to pity me. By this verse the interpreters, not without good reason, conjecture that in this Psalm he treats of the conspiracy of Absalom. And truly that horrible and tragical spectacle might bring to pass that not only the common people, but also even they that excelled in gravity, turned away their eyes from him as from a detestable monster, considering that the son, having deposed his father from the kingdom, did also seek him, even through the very deserts, to put him to death.

10 *For mine enemies, &c.*] He seeks to obtain God's mercy by another circumstance; namely, that the wicked rage against him with the greater boldness because they think him rejected and given over of God; for we know that all the basest of men grow stout and bold, when troubling the guiltless, they imagine that they deal not at all with God. For not only the hope of escaping unpunished encourages them, but also they glory in their success, when there appears no impediment to restrain their lustiness. Now what happened to David at that time, is in a manner a common thing with God's children; namely, that the wicked dare do anything against them, when they imagine that God hath cast them into their hands as a prey. For as they measure God's grace only by the present estate, whomsoever he suffers to be afflicted, they think despised, forsaken, and cast off by him. And hereupon they encourage and stimulate one another to practise anything against the afflicted, because they think that nobody will revenge it.

But this froward vaunting of theirs ought in turn to lift up our hearts, because it concerns God's glory that the thing which he hath so often promised, that is, that he will succour the poor and afflicted, should be performed indeed; and although the ungodly promise themselves pardon at God's hand, yet does not this their foolish imagination lessen their fault, but rather they work God double despire, in bereaving him of that which is most proper to him.

12 *O God, be, &c.*] How hard and sharp a temptation it was when the ungodly made account that David was rejected of God, is scarce possible to be expressed. For they spread not this report unadvisedly, but when, to seeming, they had weighed all things wisely, they gave judgment as it had been of a thing well known. And therefore it was a mark of heroic fortitude for David to overcome their perverse judgments, so that he nevertheless assured himself that God favoured him, and resorted familiarly unto him. Neither is it to be doubted, but that in calling him *his God*, he made it his buckler to put back that sore and hard assault with. Also in calling upon God for help, he therewith prays that his adversaries may be put to shame, even till they be consumed. Although it will not be amiss to read these words in the future tense, because when David has done praying, he is wont oftentimes to rear himself up against his enemies, and as it were to triumph over them. Nevertheless I have followed that which will best agree with the context. And as I have already heretofore declared after what sort this imprecation ought to be understood, I need not now repeat it.

14 And I will always hope, and will add over and besides all thy praise.

15 My mouth shall declare thy righteousness and thy saving help daily; for I know no number of them.

16 I will go on in the strengths of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness only.

14 *And I will always, &c.*] Once again coming forth as a conqueror, he applies his mind to giving of thanks. And yet there is no doubt but that at such time as the ungodly scorned his simplicity, he struggled in suchwise amid those straits, which we gather by the word *hope*. Although then there neither appeared any end of his miseries, nor the ungodly ceased scornfully to deride his trust, yet determined he to abide sure in his hope, even as it is an infallible proof

of faith to give heed to God's promise only, to be guided by the only light thereof through the thickest darkness of afflictions. This *hoping* therefore whereof David makes mention, must be judged by the encounters which he sustained at that time. And in avouching that *he will add over and besides the rest of God's praises*, he shews how sure he makes himself of the wished-for end. For it is the same as if he had said, Lord, because I am now thoroughly acquainted with thy beneficence, I doubt not but that a fresh accession shall also give me new occasion to commend thy gracious goodness. Afterwards he expresses more clearly what manner of sacrifice of praise he purposes to offer to God, protesting that he will be a continual proclaimer of his righteousness and saving help. I have told you often heretofore, that by God's righteousness is not meant that virtue whereby he yieldeth to every man his own, but the faithfulness which he sheweth towards his servants in cherishing, defending, and delivering them. And hence springs an inestimable comfort, when we hear that our welfare is so grounded upon God's righteousness, that it cannot fail, except that fail. It is well enough known that *God's saving help* is taken in this place actively. This joins he to his righteousness as the effect to the cause. For he was persuaded that he could not otherwise be saved, than because God was righteous and could not renounce himself. Furthermore, as he had been preserved so often, so sundry ways, and so wonderfully, therefore he says it shall be his incessant study to celebrate God's grace. Some expound the particle *וְ* adversatively, thus; Although I am not able to comprehend God's saving help, or although it transcend my capacity, yet will I be talking of it. But the proper signification agrees more fitly, because there is nothing that ought to kindle our minds more to the setting forth of God's praises, than when he hath bestowed innumerable benefits upon us. For admit that our hearts are not roused from their lethargy by one specimen or two, admit that they continued unexcited by a small number, yet if even an innumerable multitude correct not our torpor and coldness, our unthankfulness is utterly inexcusable. Let us learn then not to taste God's goodness lightly, and as it were fastidiously, but to stretch out all our faculties to the amplitude thereof, that it may ravish us with admiration. But I marvel how it came in the Greek interpreter's mind to translate it, *I know no learning*. The error is not worth the noting, but that some brainsick persons in old time, to glory in their own ignorance, babbled that, by the example of David, all learning and liberal sciences were to be despised, according as at this day

the anabaptists have no other pretence to vaunt themselves for spiritual persons, but because they are utterly void of all science.

16 *I will go on in the, &c.*] One may also fitly translate it, I will go into the strengths; and this translation is no less allowable than the other. For as in time of jeopardy our minds are possessed with fearfulness and sorrow, because we are not earnest enough in considering God's might; so the only remedy to ease our sorrow in adversity, is to enter into God's strengths, that they may hedge us in round about. Still as the other translation, which is more received, agrees very well, I would not depart from it, though the interpreters disagree in the sense of it. Some expound it, *I will come forth to battle upon trust of God's strength*; which, in my opinion, is too restricted: for to go on, or onward, imports as much as to abide in a steady and continual state. For although the faithful endeavour not without trouble, nor fly cheerfully, but rather groan for weariness; yet because they overcome all obstacles and difficulties with invincible courage of mind, and neither go back, nor step aside from the right way, or at least shrink not through despair, therefore they are said to go on, until they come to their journey's end. To be brief, David boasts that he shall never be disappointed of God's help, till he come to the mark. And because that in this state of weakness nothing is harder or more rare, than to persevere or hold out, he gathers in all his thoughts to the only righteousness of God. For when he says, he will be mindful of that only, it tends to this, that laying aside all wicked trusts, wherewith the whole world almost is led about, he will ground himself altogether upon God's protection, lest he should go astray after his own imaginations, or be drawn hither and thither. Augustin uses this text a hundred times and more, to overthrow the merit of works, and plausibly matches the righteousness that is given freely by God, against the meritorious righteousness of men. Nevertheless, it must be confessed that David's words are wrested to a meaning which they do not bear: for David means simply, that he must lean neither on his own wit, nor his own cunning, nor his own strength, nor any other aids, to assure himself thoroughly of welfare; but that this alone is set before him, that because God is righteous, it is not possible that he should forsake him. For the righteousness of God, as we observed just now, signifies not that free gift, whereby he reconcileth men unto him, or whereby he begetteth them again to newness of life; but his faithfulness in keeping his promises, whereby he will prove himself in-

different, rightful, and true towards his servants. And he says that only God's righteousness shall continue before his eyes, and in his mind; because that, except we restrain all our thoughts thereunto, Satan has wonderful allurements whereby to lead us away into vanity. For as soon as sundry hopes creep upon us, nothing is more natural than to fall away. And whosoever, being not content with the grace of God alone, seeks for never so little help elsewhere, he shall by his own fall give example unto others, how fickle all the stays of the earth be, that are blended with the help of God. Now if David could not otherwise keep his footing in the outward state of life, than by casting away all other trusts, and reclining himself only on God's righteousness, what manner of firmness are we like to have, when the subject is the spiritual and everlasting life, if we depart never so little from the grace of God? Therefore it cannot be denied but that the partition which the papists forge between man's free-will and God's free-grace, drives wretched souls headlong into destruction.

17 O God, thou hast taught me from my childhood: and even hitherto will I shew forth thy wondrous works.

18 Yea, even unto mine old age, and that my head wax hoar, forsake me not, O God, until I may shew thy strength to this generation, and thy power to all that come after.

19 And thy righteousness, O God, is even on high: for thou hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee?

17 *O God, thou hast, &c.*] Again he declares how much he is indebted to God's goodness, not only to encourage himself to thankfulness, but also to continue his hope for the time coming, as it will appear by the next verse. Now then, seeing that God teaches us as well by words as by deeds, it is certain that the second manner of teaching is denoted here; namely, that David has learned by continual experience even from his childhood, that nothing is better than to lean upon the one God alone. Moreover, lest he might at any time be bereft of this real doctrine, he avouches himself to have rightly profited in the same. For to this end does he say he will become a publisher of God's wonderful works, lest he should by his own unthankfulness break off the course of God's bounteousness. And hereupon depends this prayer of his, that he might not fall away

in his old age. For he reasons thus; Seeing thou hast always shewn thyself so bountiful from the beginning, O God, wilt thou not stretch out thy hand to help me, even now also when thou seest me decay? Indeed we must certainly believe thus, that since God hath vouchsafed to love us before we could speak, and to embrace us with the same favour when we were children, and hath not ceased to do us good during all the course of our life, it is not possible but he must be the same even to the last cast. Therefore the particle *כי* is taken inferentially; as if David should gather, that seeing God's goodness can never be exhausted, and that he is not changeable as men are, he will be the same towards men when they are old that he was towards them when they were children. Afterwards, he confirms his prayer with another reason, because that if he should quake in his old age, at the same time also would vanish away the grace of God, wherewith he had been sustained all the while before. For if God should presently withdraw his grace, when men have but just sipped of it, the remembrance of it would flourish but awhile. Again, if he should forsake them in the last act of their life, whom he had adorned with many of his benefits before; by this means also his bounteousness will lose its grace. David therefore desires to be helped even to the end, so that he may commend the unvarying tenor of God's grace to those that come after, and testify, even at his very death, that God never disappointeth the faithful that flee unto him. For by the *generation*, and by them *that come after*, he means his children and grandchildren, to whom the memorial of God's grace cannot otherwise be extended, until it be perfect in all points, and have accomplished its full course. He enumerates strength and power, as the effects of God's righteousness. Meanwhile, however, in these titles he sets forth the manner of his deliverance, whereof he rejoices on his own behalf; as if he had said there was exhibited in it an example of matchless goodness and power.

19 *And thy righteousness, &c.*] Some connect this verse with the last, and repeating the verb *I will declare*, as applying to several things in common, render the noun *justice* in the accusative case; but as it makes little difference, I will not stand upon it. David pursues with more words what he had spoken before. And first of all he says that God's righteousness is exalted on high; and secondly, that it has wrought mightily; and finally, for very wonder he cries out, *who is like unto thee*. And this is a thing worthy to be noted, that God's righteousness, the effects whereof

are near us and evident to us, is nevertheless placed on high because it is not to be comprehended by our own wit. For as long as we measure it by our own capacity, every little temptation swallows us up. Therefore that it may have free passage to preserve us, our minds must be spread out high and low, and far and wide, to conceive the amplitude of it. Thereunto also is referred the second member concerning God's mighty works. For if we yield rightful and due praise to his known power, we shall never want occasion of hoping well. Finally, it is fitting that our sense of God's goodness should proceed so far as that it may ravish us to wondering. So will it come to pass, that our minds, which are oftentimes carried hither and thither with causeless inquietness, shall settle themselves only upon God. For if any temptation be forced upon us, by and by we make an elephant of a fly, or rather we make us high mountains to keep off God's hand from us; meanwhile we restrain God's power in a niggardly spirit. David's exclamation therefore tends to this, that we should learn to force our way by faith, and to hold God's power, according as it deserves, superior to all impediments. For though all men acknowledge in word that none is like unto God, yet is there scarce one out of a hundred that is thoroughly and earnestly persuaded that he alone is able enough to save him.

20 For thou hast made me to see many and evil tribulations, *but* thou shalt turn and quicken me, and thou shalt turn and lift me out of the bottomless pits of the earth.

21 Thou shalt multiply my greatness, and thou shalt turn and comfort me.

22 And I shall sing thy truth unto thee upon an instrument of music, O my God: I shall sing unto thee upon the harp, thou Holy One of Israel.

23 My lips shall rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed.

24 Yea and my tongue shall daily talk of thy righteousness: for they are brought to shame that sought my harm.

20 *For thou hast, &c.*] It is known that the verb *to see* among the Hebrews is transferred to the other senses; and therefore David complains that the harms which he had felt had been *shewn* him. And as he thanks God for his deliverances, so again he acknowledges that whatsoever ad-

versity he had endured, it was not laid on him but by God's purpose and will. But first we must consider David's object: for that he may by comparison illustrate God's grace, he relates how hardly he had been dealt with. If he had always enjoyed prosperity alike, there had been cause why he might have been glad, but then would he not have felt what it is to be delivered from destruction by the stupendous power of God. For we must be brought down even to death, ere God can be seen to be our deliverer. For as we are born without thought and understanding, the first beginning of our life shews not unto us evidently enough the author himself of it. But when God succoureth us in despair, the very raising of us up is to us a bright mirror of his grace. After this manner David amplifies God's benefit, that being drowned in the bottomless deep, he was notwithstanding plucked out by his hand and brought again to the light. And he says not only that he was by God's benefit preserved safe and sound, but also that he was increased in honour: which change was as it were the crowning of his restoration, just as if he had been lifted out of hell, even up to heaven. When he repeats the third time, *that God turned*, it makes to the commendation of his providence, as if he should say none of his adversity had happened to him by chance, because as soon as God's favour shone upon him, all things were reversed.

22 *And I shall sing, &c.*] Still he breaks forth into thanksgiving; because he perceives that God so freely and frankly helpeth his servants, in order that his goodness may be celebrated. In the names of *viol and harp*, he alludes to the received custom. For there is no doubt but that to sing God's praises to the harp and the viol formed a part of the discipline under the law, and of the typical service. I am speaking of public thanksgiving: for although we are not forbidden to intermix musical instruments privately, yet are they banished out of churches by manifest decree of the Holy Ghost, when Paul, 1 Cor. xiv. 13, permits us not to praise God or to pray but in a known tongue. By the word *truth* he means that as he was preserved by the power of God the reward of his hope was rendered unto him. For God's promises and his truth in performing them are things linked together in inseparable union. But unless we depend upon God's word, all the benefits that he bestoweth upon us will be but tasteless to us. Also we shall never be stirred either to prayer or to thanksgiving, except the same word shine before us. So much the more detestable then is the fury of that diabolical man Servetus, who teaches that the rule of praying is perverted, if faithfulness is coupled with the promises; as if we

could of ourselves press into the presence of God, before such time as he allureth us by his own voice. In the next verse David expresses better, that he will not give thanks unto God feignedly, nor superficially, but will bound forward to this office of devotion with an earnest fervour. For by the figures which he uses, he gives us briefly to understand that there can be no greater pleasure to him than to praise God, and so he indirectly taunts the heathenish mirth of those who setting God aside rejoice to themselves in their prosperity. To the same purpose tends also the last verse; that is, that no joy shall be sweet and desirable unto him, but such as is joined with the praise of God, and that it shall be the pleasantest fruit that can be to him, to celebrate his Redeemer with praises.

PSALM LXXII.

David making prayer in the name of the whole church, for the continual prosperity of the kingdom that was promised him, teaches therewith that the true happiness of the godly consists in being governed by the hand of the king that was chosen by God.

[*A Psalm for Solomon.*]

1 Give thy judgments to the king, O God, and thy righteousness to the king's son.

2 He shall judge thy people in righteousness, and thy poor in judgment.

3 The mountains shall bring forth peace to the people, and the hills in righteousness.

4 He shall judge the poor of thy people, he shall save the children of the afflicted, and he shall break the oppressor in pieces.

5 They shall fear thee with the sun, and in the presence of the moon, generation of generations.

6 He shall come down like the rain upon the mown grass; and as the showers that water the earth.

Solomon.] The title of the Psalm does not mark the author of it. For as it is expressly said in the end, that this was the last of David's prayers, it is more likely that the Psalm was made by him: unless perhaps Solomon, his successor, put the prayer of his father into measure, that it

might be the better known, and the more used among the people, which is not very improbable. But as ψ signifies many things, one may expound it that this song was made in the behalf of Solomon; which if we admit, yet is it to be noted, that under the person of one man there is comprehended the perpetual state of the kingdom. Nevertheless, all things being well weighed, I incline to this conjecture, that what David had prayed for upon his death-bed was brought into the form of a psalm by his son, that it might be consigned to everlasting remembrance. For it seems to be added to set purpose, as in a matter of very great importance, that this is the last prayer of David's, that the faithful should with greater heed and earnestness join their prayers with the memorable prayer of the holy king. Inasmuch then as Solomon did but adorn with the grace of poetry the matter which he had received from his father, let us admit David for the chief author of it. They that would simply have it to be but a prophecy of Christ's kingdom, seem to wrest the words too violently. Again; we must always beware that we give not the Jews occasion of making an outcry, as if we were purposed to draw to Christ by sophistry the things that agree not with him directly. But since David, being anointed king by God's commandment, knew that he and his posterity held the kingdom upon condition that at length the power and dominion should come unto Christ; and moreover, that the worldly welfare of the people was so comprehended in that kingdom for the time, as that out of that shadow there should at length spring up some better and more excellent thing, that is, spiritual and everlasting happiness; worthily was he so careful for the continuance of this kingdom, and wished so earnestly for it, that by repeating his desire at his last gasp, he would have it known that of all his cares this was the chief. For as for that which is written here concerning everlasting dominion, it cannot be restrained to one man or to a few; no, nor even to twenty ages; but thereby is denoted the succession which had its end and full accomplishment in Christ.

1 *Give thy judgments, &c.*] Although David, in whose hand the promise was deposited, did at his death anxiously commend to God his son whom he should leave successor of his kingdom, yet it is not to be doubted but that he endited to the church a form of common prayer, as well that the faithful, every one of them, persuading themselves that they could not otherwise live well and happily than under one head, should observe this lawful order; as also that by the typical kingdom they might be led even unto Christ; and the effect is, that God should furnish his chosen king with

the spirit of uprightness and wisdom. For by the terms *righteousness* and *judgment* he means a form of government framed aright, contrasting it with the tyrannical and unbridled licentiousness of heathen kings, who, setting God aside, lord it at their pleasure; and so he distinguishes the holy king of Israel, endued with heavenly anointing, from other earthly kings. Although we gather from his words, by the way, that no government in the world can be framed aright but by God's appointment, and by the guidance of the Holy Ghost. For if kings were sufficiently furnished by their own proper power, it had been a fondness for David to crave that at another's hand, by way of petition, which they had at home in their own houses. But now, in desiring God's righteousness and judgments to be given to kings, he puts them in mind that none are meet to execute that charge, further than as they are framed by the hand of God. And therefore, in Solomon's Proverbs, viii. 15, God's wisdom crieth out, that kings reign by her. Neither is it any marvel, considering civil order is a most excellent thing, that God will be acknowledged to be the author thereof, and challengeth the whole praise of it to himself. Nevertheless it is expedient to descend from the general kind to the species. For seeing it is the especial work of God to set up rightful government in the world, and to maintain it, much more needful was it that he should manifest the peculiar grace of his Spirit, in cherishing and preserving that sacred kingdom which he had chosen before all others. There is no doubt but by *the king's son* he means his successors: though at the same time he has also an eye to this promise, *Of the fruit of thy womb will I set upon thy seat*; Ps. cxxxii. 11. But there is no such perfection of virtue to be found in the offspring of David till you come to Christ. For we know that as soon as Solomon was dead, the dignity of the kingdom decayed, and from thenceforth the wealth of it abated and was reduced, until the people were carried into captivity, the king shamefully put to death, and the kingdom was involved in dismal ruin. Neither was there setting up again after their return, such as could put them in any great hope, until at length Christ issued out of the withered stock of Jesse. And therefore among the children of David he holdeth the chief degree.

2 *He shall judge thy people, &c.*] Some read it in the form of a wish; others retain the future tense, so that it should be a prophecy. But it is more correct to understand something intermediate. For whatsoever things will be spoken hereafter flow out of this blessing of God; namely, if the king be garnished with righteousness and

judgment. Thus therefore must the sentence be construed; Govern our king, O God, that he may judge. Or else thus; When thou shalt have endued him with thy righteousness, then shall he judge aright. For to govern a realm well is a far more excellent gift than may grow out of the earth. But a much more heavenly gift is Christ's spiritual government, whereby all things are restored to their perfect order. And although in the first member he speaks of all the people in general, yet adds he *the poor* by name, who, by reason of their helplessness and weakness, have need of others' help, and for whose sakes kings are armed with the sword to redress their wrongful oppressions. Hence also springs peace, whereof mention is made in the third verse. For as this name of *peace* denotes among the Hebrews not only *rest* and *quietness*, but also *all prosperous success*, David teaches us that the people shall then prosper, if the state of the commonweal be framed by the rule of righteousness. And in the *bringing forth of peace*, there is a metaphor taken from the fertility of the earth; as if he should say there should no corner be void of happiness. For *mountains* are commonly barren, or at least yield not so great abundance of fruits as valleys. However both the word *peace* and the word *righteousness* are joined with either member, and must be repeated twice; as if he had said, that by righteousness peace should be spread over all parts of the earth. Others read righteousness simply; but the letter \beth seems not to be superfluous.

4 *He shall judge the poor, &c.*] He proceeds to the end and fruit of rightful government, and unfolds more at large that which he had spoken of the afflicted among the people. But this principle must be borne in mind, that it comes not otherwise to pass that kings keep themselves in rightfulness and equity than by the grace of God; for when the spirit of righteousness from heaven govern them not, every government turns to tyranny and plunder. Now, because God had promised that he would have a care of the poor and afflicted among his people, that David may obtain the suit which he makes for the king, he shews that the same shall tend to the comfort of the poor. Indeed there is no accepting of persons with God; but yet not without cause doth God commit the feeble to his care above the others, for they are most subject to wrong and violence: for take away laws and judgments, and the mightier any man is, the more shall he be able to harass his own brethren. David therefore makes special mention that the king shall be a stay to such as are in no safety but by the defence of the magistrate, and avouches that he shall be their avenger when they are wronged unworthily. More-

over, it is a common phrase among the Hebrews to say, *the children of the afflicted*, for the afflicted themselves: according as the Greeks speak sometimes, as when they say *υἱὸς ἰατροῦ*, *the sons of physicians*, for physicians. But because the king cannot execute the office that David assigns to him in succouring and defending the poor, unless he beat down the wicked by authority and force of hand, not without good reason is there added in the end of the verse, that the *oppressors or extortioners shall be broken in pieces* where righteousness reigns. For one must not wait till they give place of themselves, but they must be repressed by the sword, lest they run riot in their naughtiness and boldness. Therefore it behoves a prince to be a man of wisdom, and to be resolutely purposed to repress the wicked, that the meek and mild may obtain their right. And so none shall be meet to govern but he that has learned to be rigorous when the case requires. For it cannot be but licentiousness must make head where the prince is either effeminate and spiritless, or where he is too gentle and too forbearing. And it was truly said in old time, that it is worse living under a prince through whose forbearance all things are lawful, than under a tyrant where there is no liberty at all.

5 *They shall fear thee, &c.*] If you read this as an apostrophe, it may aptly be referred to the king; namely, that the chief ornaments of a king to win love and reverence from his subjects are, if he give every man his right indifferently, if he be courteous to help the afflicted, and severe in subduing the boldness of the wicked. But it will agree better to be understood of God himself, without changing the person. For although it be an inestimable benefit to have kept uprightness among men, yet does God's religion deserve to be had in greater estimation. And therefore not without cause does David commend it as a fruit of holy and godly government, that it brings with it true religion and the fear of God. And therefore Paul, 1 Tim. ii. 2, enjoining us to pray for kings, expresses this end distinctly, *that we may live a quiet life under them in all honesty and godliness*. Forasmuch, then, as there is danger that if civil government fell to the ground religion should be destroyed and God's service go to wreck, David desires God to have respect of his own name and glory in preserving the king. By this selfsame argument he both puts kings in mind of their duty, and also stirs the people to praying, because nothing is better than for men to bend themselves with heart and mind to the maintenance of God's religion. Now when it comes to Christ, this applies far more truly to him,

because true religion is founded nowhere else but in his kingdom. And surely, in extending the service of God to the end of the world, David gives us to understand, by the way, that he mounts up in thought to that everlasting kingdom which God had promised.

6 *He shall come down, &c.*] Although the similitude seem somewhat of the harshest, yet does it neatly and appositely express how much profit redounds to all from the good and due constitution of a kingdom. For we know that meadows are wont to be mown in the beginning of summer, when the heat prevails, so that, if the earth yield not new moisture, even the very roots would wither by reason of the bareness of the ground. David therefore teaches that God provideth no less for the welfare of his church, by defending it under the hand of the king, than he defendeth the earth from scorching heat by watering it. But we see this to be fulfilled chiefly in Christ, who, by distilling upon it his secret grace, maketh his church to put forth shoots.

7 In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace, until there be no more a moon.

8 And he shall bear dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the land.

9 The inhabitants of the wilderness shall fall down before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.

10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring him presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall bring him a gift.

11 And all kings shall kneel before him: all nations shall serve him.

7 *In his days, &c.*] I need not repeat often what I have said once, that all these sentences depend upon the first verse. Therefore that the just men might flourish, and the people live in prosperity, David has prayed that the king might be adorned with righteousness and judgment. It was Solomon's duty, indeed, to maintain the righteous; but it is Christ's proper office to make men righteous. For he not only giveth every man his own, but also reformeth their hearts with his Spirit. And by this means bringeth he righteousness again from exile, which otherwise would be altogether banished from the world. Upon this follows God's blessing, wherewith he cheereth all his children, while they see that under their king Christ they want nothing that may make them thoroughly happy. If any one like to

take the word *peace* in its proper and more restricted signification, I will not oppose it. And surely, to the fulness of a blessed life, nothing is more to be desired than peace; considering that in the turmoils of war abundance of all things does men in a manner no good, but is marred and brought to nought. Now then, when David prolongs the king's days to the end of the world, hence it appears the better that he not only comprehends his own posterity, which possessed the earthly throne, but also that he mounts up to Christ; who, by rising from death, purchased himself a heavenly life and glory, that he might govern his church time without end.

8 *And he shall bear, &c.*] Because the Lord, when he promised his people the land to inherit, assigned these four boundaries to it, Gen. xv. 18, David means that, as long as the kingdom is safe and sound, they shall possess the whole of the promised land; that the faithful might understand that God's blessing should not in all points stand good longer than while the kingdom flourished. Therefore he avouches that he shall bear rule from the Red sea, or from that bay of the Egyptian sea, unto the sea of Syria, which they call the sea of Palestine, and also from Euphrates unto the great wilderness. Now if any one make exception that such narrow bounds agree not with the kingdom of Christ, which was to be spread from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, the solution is easy, that David applies it to his own time because amplitude was not as yet developed; therefore he began with that description which was known and commonly spoken of under the law and the prophets; yea, and Christ himself began his reign there before he passed into the uttermost coasts of the earth; according as it is said, in Psalm cx. 2, *The Lord shall send the sceptre of thy power out of Sion.* But, soon after, he begins to enlarge its borders, declaring that the kings beyond the sea shall be tributary also, like as he says that the kings of the wilderness shall take his yoke upon them. As for the word **צִי**, I doubt not but he denotes thereby such as were far from the land of Canaan towards the south. And by and by, in general terms, the prophet adds *that the king's enemies should kiss the earth*, in token of reverence. For we know that the kings of the East used this ceremony, whereunto Alexander the Great would have compelled his subjects after he had conquered the East, which gave rise to mighty quarrels, because the Macedonians stoutly refused so slavish and degrading an obeisance. The meaning therefore is, that the king whom God shall choose in Judah shall subdue

his enemies far and wide, so that they shall humbly worship him.

10 *The kings of Tarshish, &c.*] He proceeds with that which he had spoken of the enlarging of the kingdom. By the name of Tarshish the Hebrews mean all the coast that lies towards Cilicia. Therefore, by *the isles*, he denotes all the coast of the Mediterranean sea, from Cilicia to Greece. For as the Jews, being content with the commodities of their own country, sailed not far off, as other nations did, or rather, as God had hemmed them in that they should not corrupt themselves with foreign fashions, it came to pass that they called those foreign countries *isles* which had the sea beating upon them. I confess, indeed, that Cyprus and Crete, and other islands, are comprehended in that name; but I say that that name extends here to all lands that were situate beyond the Mediterranean sea. By the words מַנְחָה and אֶשְׁכֶּר, understand any tribute or custom, and not voluntary offerings; for he speaks of his vanquished enemies, and of the witness of their subjection. Notwithstanding, the scripture seems to use those terms advisedly, to mitigate the odium of the matter; as if he should indirectly reprove subjects for defrauding princes of their customs. Some will that by שֶׁבַּא is denoted Arabia, and by סִבָּא Ethiopia. Nevertheless, the conjecture of those is allowable, who by the first word understand all that part of the gulf of Arabia which lies towards Africa; and, by the second word, which is written with ס, the country of Sabea, which was the more pleasant and fruitful country. How stupidly this passage is wrested in popedom, it pertains nothing to the matter to tell. For they chant this verse, of the philosophers or wise men that came to worship Christ. As if, forsooth, it was at their pleasure, upon the sudden, to make kings of philosophers; and, besides that also, to change the quarters of the world, to make of the east the south or the west. In the next verse he expresses more clearly that all the world shall be subject to the dominion of Christ. For surely the kingdom of Judah never flourished more than under Solomon, and yet even then there were but a few kings that paid him tribute; and that was but mean, and, moreover, upon condition that they might live freely after their own laws. David therefore, beginning with his own children and their posterity, mounted up by the spirit of prophecy to the spiritual kingdom of Christ, which is a thing especially worthy to be noted, that we may know that we are not brought into the hope of everlasting salvation by chance, but because our heavenly Father had already predestinated us in his Son. And hereby we gather, further,

that kings also have place in Christ's church and flock. And yet David disarms them not of their sword, nor despoils them of their crown, to admit them into the church; but he says that they shall come with their high estate to cast themselves down at Christ's feet.

12 For he shall rescue the poor when he crieth; and the needy person that hath no helper.

13 He shall have pity upon the needy and poor, and shall save the lives of the poor.

14 He shall deliver them from craft and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight.

15 And he shall live: and Sheba shall give him of her gold: and they shall pray for him evermore, and bless him daily.

12 *For he shall rescue, &c.*] Again he avouches that the kingdom which he commends shall not be tyrannical or cruel, as the greater part of kings are, who, neglecting the public weal, are wholly occupied with their own interests; whereby it comes to pass that they unmercifully oppress their miserable subjects, yea rather, the more formidable any of them is, and the more absorbing his rapacity, so much the more excellent is he accounted. But if it be a sentence to be verified by all mankind in manner of a proverb, that in nothing do men approach nearer to God than in beneficence, it were sadly against reason that this virtue should not shine forth in kings, whom God hath linked more nearly unto him. Therefore David, not without cause, that he may make the king beloved that was chosen by God, says not only that he shall be a maintainer of right and equity, but also so gentle and merciful, that he shall be ready to defend even the most despised of all: qualities which are too seldom found in sovereigns, who, dazzled with their own splendour, withdraw themselves far from the afflicted, as though it were a care beneath them, and unbecoming their royal estate. But David avouches that the blood of the poor, which is wont to be accounted but vile, and as a thing of nought, shall be in very great esteem with this heavenly king. For in the word *rescue* is denoted constancy and magnanimity; for it were not enough for a king to hate falsehood and extortion, unless he set himself stoutly against them and punish them. Under the terms *craft*, and *violence*, he comprehends all kind of misdealing: for a man, in doing harm, is either a lion or a fox. For some rage with open force, and others creep to misdealing insidiously and

by stealthy arts. Moreover, we know that the chief sovereignty is given to Christ both in heaven and earth, Matt. xxviii. 18, that he might defend his servants not only from temporal annoyances, but especially from all harm at Satan's hand, until he have rescued them from all trouble and gathered them into everlasting rest.

15 *And he shall live, &c.*] Some refer this word, *live*, to the poor, but it seems constrained. David therefore avouches that this king shall be rewarded with long life, which is not the meanest of God's earthly benefits. The words that follow must be read indefinitely, as if he had said, He shall have gold of Arabia given him, and prayers shall be made everywhere for his welfare. Again he repeats that which he had said concerning his power. For if Arabia shall pay tribute, what a mass of riches shall be gathered out of so many countries nearer home. Now, although Christ reign not to hoard up gold, yet David meant to teach, by a figure, that the nations which were furthest off should do homage to him, so as to yield themselves and all that they had unto him. For it is no strange thing for the glory of the spiritual kingdom to be portrayed under outward royalty. David therefore foretold that Christ's kingdom should be most wealthy, but according to the spiritual character thereof: whereby it appears how wickedly and corruptly the papists have abused this place, to scrape to themselves the transitory riches of the world. Moreover, under the common prayers of the people, whereby the king's welfare is commended to God, he denotes that they shall be his subjects willingly, so that they shall like nothing so well as to be under his governance. For although many shun his yoke, and the hypocrites murmur secretly in themselves, and would gladly abolish the memorial of Christ, if they might have their own choice, yet does it become all the godly to be minded otherwise; not only because the scripture commands this duty to be performed to all earthly kings, but also because they must have a special desire and care to spread abroad this kingdom, wherein both the majesty of God shines forth, and also their own welfare and happiness are included. And therefore in Psalm cxviii. we shall see a form of prayer dictated for the whole church, that God should bless this king; not that Christ hath need of our suffrages, but because he justly exacteth this testimony of godliness at his servants' hands, by which also they may exercise themselves to pray earnestly for the coming of Christ's kingdom.

16 A handful of corn shall be *sowed* in earth upon the head of the hills; the fruit thereof shall be shaken

as of Lebanon ; and they shall pass out of the city, as it were a plant of the earth.

17 His name shall continue for ever, his name shall be spread abroad in the sight of the sun : and all nations shall bless themselves in him, and call him blessed.

18 Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, that only worketh wonders.

19 And blessed be the name of his glory for ever ; and let all the earth be replenished with his glory. So be it, and so be it.

20 Here end the prayers of David, the son of Jesse.

16 *A handful of corn, &c.*] The opinion of those is probable, who take a *handful* to import as much as a small portion. And by these two circumstances, they think there is denoted a rare and unaccustomed fertility ; that whereas there is sown but a very little quantity of wheat, namely, but as much as a man can hold in the palm of his hand, yea, and that upon the tops of mountains, which most commonly are not so fruitful grounds, yet shall there be most plenteous increase, so that the ears shall make a noise as the trees in Lebanon. Notwithstanding, I cannot tell whether this so subtle comparison between the seed-time and the harvest-time be answerable to the words of David. Therefore it will be admissible to take it more simply, that there shall be so great abundance of wheat upon the tops of hills, that it may be reaped with full hand. Now then, under this figure is described God's blessing ; as if David had said, there shall be abundance of all good things under Christ. Thereunto is also added increase of children ; as if he should say that not only the earth should bring forth store of all kinds of fruits, but also the cities and towns should be fruitful in bringing forth men. I liked best to translate the word *Lebanon* in the genitive case ; for the transfer of name which others adopt, putting the term mountain for trees, is somewhat harsh.

17 *His name shall, &c.*] Again he repeats that which he had spoken before of the everlastingness of this kingdom. And there is no doubt but he meant to distinguish it from earthly kingdoms, which either vanish away suddenly, or else fall at length by their own bulk ; and doubtless they shew by their destruction, that nothing is of long continuance and stable in this world. When he says, that *his name*

shall continue for ever; it must not be taken as though his fame should still remain alive when he himself is dead, according as worldly men also are vexed with thought lest their name should be buried together with their body: but the prophet, speaking of his kingdom, says that his name shall evermore be glorious and rise in men's mouths. Some expound לפכי שמש as though he preferred the honour which God would give to the kings of Judah, before the brightness of the sun, but it is at variance with the context: for in the same sense he had said before, *with the sun, and in the presence of the moon*. Now, therefore, after he has made mention of his long continuance, he adds, by way of exposition, *that his name shall be spread abroad in the sight of the sun*. Literally it is, *his name shall have children*; because as the sun rises daily to the world, so shall the strength of this king be continually renewed, and so hold on from time to time, for ever. So also we shall see hereafter, that the sun and moon are called witnesses of the same eternity, Psalm lxxix. 38. Whence it follows that this cannot be understood of the earthly kingdom, which flourished but awhile in the house of David, and not only lost its vigour in the third successor, but also was at length extinguished with shame. But as for Christ's kingdom, although it often give way upon the earth, according as it is assailed with the furious hatred of the whole world, and battered with the sorest engines of Satan, yet is it wonderfully held up by God, so that it decays not. What follows, *that all nations shall bless themselves in him*, admits a twofold sense. For often the Hebrews speak thus, when any man is taken as a pattern of blessing; as for example, a man blessed himself in David, who beseeches God to be as beneficent and bounteous to him as he was to David. According also as, on the contrary side, he is said to curse in Sodom and Gomorrah, who takes the names of those cities to curse by. Then if these two sayings, *they shall bless themselves in him, and they shall call him blessed*, are urged in the same sense, *to bless themselves in the king*, will imply as much as to wish themselves the same good luck that he has, because his happy state shall be the admiration of all men. But if any man like to put a difference between these two sayings, which is no less probable; *to bless in the king* shall signify as much as to seek the cause of their welfare at his hand; because the Gentiles shall see that nothing is more to be wished for on their behalf than to adopt laws from him.

18 *Blessed be the Lord, &c.*] After David has prayed for prosperity to his posterity, because he was assured by the

word of God that his petition should not be in vain, he bursts out into the praise of God. For except he had with the eyes of faith espied the things which we have seen hitherto, his rejoicing had not been so free and cheerful. When he says that *God only worketh wonders*, no doubt it is referred to the present case, not only to commend the excellence of the kingdom, but also to put himself and others in mind that there needs God's wonderful and incredible working for the preservation of the same. And certainly no thanks are due to nearly the whole of his posterity, that the royal throne had not fallen a hundred times, yea, and been swallowed quite up. To go no further, was not Solomon's most shameful falling away deserving of utter destruction? And as for the rest of his successors, saving Josias, Ezechias, and Josaphat, and a few others, fell they not from worse to worse, as though they strove to outdo their predecessors, and so provoked God's curse as it were of set purpose; so as it was a wonder that he thundered not upon them forthwith, to destroy them, and their children? David then being endued with the spirit of prophecy, as he was not ignorant how Satan would evermore be an enemy to the welfare of the church, might gather that the grace of God, which he treats of at this time, would not continue for ever in his posterity without great and arduous difficulties. And truly the event shewed afterwards, with how many miracles God made good his promises, whether we consider their returning from the captivity of Babylon, or the incredible deliverances that followed, until Christ sprang forth as a green twig out of a dead tree. Hence with good reason he prays that the glory of his name may fill the whole earth, inasmuch as that kingdom was to be enlarged even to the uttermost borders of the world. And that all the godly should with earnest affection, nay ardour, join themselves with him in their prayers, there is added a confirmation. So be it, and so be it.

20 *Here end the prayers, &c.*] I told you that this was not added for nought by Solomon, considering that he garnished this matter with poetic numbers, not only because he would not defraud his father of his due praise, but also to stir up the church the more earnestly to pouring out those prayers, which David had never failed in, even to his last breath. Let us bear in mind then, that we ought to pray to God, as well with earnest affection, as also with unwearied diligence, that he will maintain his church under the hand of his Son. And the name of his father Jesse seems to recall the memory of his original; that thereby the grace of God may be the more renowned, who, taking out of a sheep-

old a man unknown to fame, who was also the youngest and least esteemed among his brethren, advanced him to so high a degree of honour as to make him king of his elect people.

PSALM LXXIII.

In the beginning of this Psalm, David, or whosoever was the author of it, proclaims the righteousness and goodness of God, even, as it were, against the experience of his flesh. He then confesses that when he saw the wicked in all the pride of wealth, and luxuriating in pleasures, yea mocking God scornfully, and inhumanly harassing the good and simple; and the more any man was earnest to keep himself innocent, the more he was weighed down with distresses; nay, that all the children of God were pining away under care and sorrow; and that God, as though he sat an inactive and unconcerned spectator in heaven, redressed not such sad disorders; he was cut to the soul, so that he wellnigh renounced all concern for religion, and fear of God. Thirdly, he reproves his own folly, for hasting to give judgment wrongly according to the present state of things; and shews that there is need of patience, that faith fail not under disquietudes. At length he concludes, that if a man commit his steps to God's mysterious providence, there will be a clear difference at last, whereby it will appear that neither the righteous are defrauded of their reward nor the wicked escape the hand of the judge.

[*A Psalm of Asaph.*]

1 Yet is God good to Israel, to them that are right in heart.

2 As for me, my feet were almost slidden, my legs were even as good as slipped from me.

3 For I had a heartburning at the fools, to see the peace of the ungodly.

I am not curious in inquiring about the author of this Psalm: though in my opinion it is probable that as the charge of singing it was committed to Asaph himself, his name was used, while David's was omitted, according as things sufficiently known of themselves are frequently wont to be suppressed. Moreover, how profitable the consideration of this doctrine may be to us, it is easy to gather by the example of the prophet, who though he were after no ordinary sort exercised in true godliness, yet could scarce keep his footing while reeling to and fro on ground so slippery; nay, he confesses that before he returned to a sound mind, he had almost sunk into a state of brutish

apathy. As for us, indeed, how slightly we have tasted of God's providence, experience shews. All of us confess that the world is ruled by God's hand; but if that principle were rooted in our hearts in deed, far different would be the constancy of our faith in triumphing over adversity. As it is, seeing that every slight dislodges this knowledge from our breasts, it is evident that we have not yet been seriously and unfeignedly convinced of its truth. Besides this, Satan, by countless artifices, draws a veil of darkness over us, and in the confusion that prevails in the world, there is so much mist that it is difficult to conclude that God regards the earth. The ungodly for the most part triumph, and though they provoke God's vengeance with deliberate purpose, they appear to mock him with impunity, since he forbears to strike them. The good and simple, pinched with poverty, oppressed with many inconveniences, vexed with various wrongs, and covered with shame and reproach, are fain to sigh and groan; and the more they endeavour to do good to all men, the greater the licentiousness with which the wicked dare abuse their patience. Who is not importuned by the unholy suggestion that the affairs of the world roll on at random? There can be no doubt that it is deeply impressed on the minds of the unbelieving, whom God enlighteneth not with his Spirit, that he may lift them up to the life eternal. For this cause, says Solomon, the hearts of men are replenished with ungodliness and contempt of God, because all things turn out alike to the good and bad; that is to say, because they consider that things which are not duly ordered are not under the management of God. We know there were some of the philosophers, that maintained God's providence. But experience shewed that they were not yet fully persuaded of it, so that when things fell out contrary to their expectation, they openly unsaid that which they had said before: whereof we have a notable example in Brutus. Nothing can be imagined more courageous than that man; and all his contemporaries avouched him to have been a man of singular wisdom; and he, as being a Stoic, talked in terms of high praise of the power and providence of God; yet, when he was overcome by Antony, he cried out, that whatsoever he had believed concerning virtue was mere trifling; and that the endeavour of living well was but an illusion; for fortune ruled all dominion in men's affairs. So, that man of heroic mind, and who was a mirror of amazing steadfastness, renouncing virtue, and under the name thereof, cursing God, fell off with shame. And so the fluctuating issues of things turn the judgments of all ungodly persons hither and thither. For how should heathenish

men, that are not begotten again by the Spirit of God, withstand such strong and violent engines; since even the godly have need of the matchless succour of heavenly grace, that the same temptation prevail not in their hearts; and since it happens that even they also sometimes gave way under the shock, like as David confesses here, that he wellnigh slipped: But now I come to the words.

[*Yet is God good, &c.*] The adverb **78**, which he uses, does not simply affirm in this place, but is taken adversatively for *yet notwithstanding*. And because David makes an abrupt beginning, it is worth noting, that before he broke forth into this manner of speech, he was violently agitated with perplexing and conflicting suggestions. For he had exercised himself in most difficult encounters like a stout athlete; and after long and much labour he shook off his wicked imaginations and concluded with himself that *yet notwithstanding* God is merciful to his servants, and a faithful maintainer of their welfare. And so there is an implied anthesis, betwixt the unhallowed imaginations that Satan had put in his heart, and this testimony of true godliness wherewith he confirms himself at this time; as though he denounced the understanding of his flesh, for admitting any misgiving concerning God's providence. Now then, we perceive how vehement David's exclamation is. For he does not mount the platform to dispute like a philosopher, or to deliver a speech of studied elegance, but as though he had escaped from hell to give full vent to his exultation on the victory he had gotten. For to the intent he may by his own example shew how hard an encounter it was, he does as it were pour out his heart, and would have somewhat more to be understood than he expresses in words. The effect is, that although God to outward appearance neglect his servants, yet he evermore embraceth them with his favour. For he especially commends God's providence in ruling the faithful; that they may know, not only that they are governed with other creatures by God, but also that God attendeth to their welfare with a peculiar care, no otherwise than the master of a family is anxiously careful for his own household. Although then he rule the whole world, yet he vouchsafeth to look more nearly to his church, which he hath taken upon him to defend. This is the reason why the prophet speaks of Israel by name, and immediately restrains the same to the upright in heart; wherein there is a kind of correction. For many that proudly pretend the name of Israel, as though they were the chief members of the church, are but Ishmaelites and Edomites. David therefore, minding to cross out the

misbegotten children of Abraham from the roll of the godly, acknowledges no man for an Israelite, but the pure and perfect worshipper of God; as if he should say, When I avouch God to be good to his house of Israel, I mean it not of all men who holding themselves content with the outward profession only, pretend a false title, but of Abraham's spiritual children, who sanctify themselves to God with pure affection of heart. Some expound it, that *God is good to Israel*, that is, to his chosen people; and secondly, also to strangers born, provided they follow true uprightness; but it is frigid and constrained. Therefore, let us hold to that which I have said: for David, in commending God's goodness towards his chosen people and church, was constrained to cut off many hypocrites that had revolted from the true service of God, and therefore were unworthy of God's fatherly favour. And to these words of the prophet answereth Christ; saying, John i. 47, *Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile*. For as among the Jews, the fear of God was utterly quenched, and there remained in a manner nothing but the circumcision that was made with hand; Christ distinguishes the lawful children of Abraham from the counterfeit, by this mark, that they are pure and void of deceit. And truly, in the service of God the inward uncorruptness of the heart holds the chief place.

2 *As for me, my feet, &c.*] Word for word it is, *And I*, which must be read with earnestness. For David's meaning is, that these temptations, which tend to dishonour God and overwhelm faith, not only befall the meaner sort of men, or such as are endued with some light smack of godliness, but also happened even to himself, who ought to have profited above others in God's school. Therefore by setting himself forth for an example, he meant to stir us up the more, and to spur us forward to earnest endeavour of taking heed. But although he fainted not, yet by saying that he was at the point of falling, he warns us that all are in peril of falling unless God hold them up by a strong hand. Afterwards he shews the very kind of temptation itself; namely, that by esteeming the wicked to be happy by reason of their present estate, he was touched with envy. A sore and hurtful temptation is it, when we not only find fault secretly with God, for not setting matters in order, but also give ourselves the rein to sin boldly, when to our seeming we may do it with impunity. That sarcastic remark of the younger Dennis when he had robbed a temple, and had a prosperous journey by sea with the plunder, is well known; "See you not," saith he, "how the gods favour church robbers?" So their suc-

cess is an enticement to sin, because we think that God liketh them whom he beareth with so gently. So it was that the prosperous state of them wounded David, as though nothing could have been better than to join himself in fellowship with them. And by calling the wicked *fools* or *madmen*, he means not that they sin through lack of knowledge, or by oversight; but he opposes their madness to the fear of God, which is the chief point of wisdom. For although the ungodly are wily, yet as they hold not the first principles of right judgment, namely, that our life must be framed according to the will of God, they are mad in their own blindness.

4 For there be no thongs to the death of them, and their strength is fat.

5 They are not in pains *as other* men, and they are not scourged with other men.

6 Therefore doth pride wind about them as a chain; the apparel of violence hath covered them.

7 The eye of them strouteth out for fatness: they have overpassed the thoughts of their heart.

8 They swim afloat, and talk of extortion in wickedness: they speak from aloft.

9 They have set their mouth against heaven; and the tongue of them walketh through the earth.

4 *For there be no thongs, &c.*] He describes the advantages of the ungodly, which are so many engines to batter the faith of the godly. And he begins with their prosperous health, that they are lusty, and strong, and draw not out their breath laboriously through continual sicknesses. Some take *the thongs unto death*, for stays from death, as if he had said, They die apace in the twinkling of an eye, and wrestle not with the pangs of death; like as also in the book of Job, xxi. 13, it is accounted a worldly blessing that profane persons go down into their grave quickly, when they have taken their fill of luxurious pleasures. And Julius Cæsar, the day before he died, said it seemed to him a happy death, to die suddenly and unawares. Therefore David, according to those interpreters, complains that the wicked pass away to their death by an easy and smooth course, without trouble or grief. But I subscribe rather to the opinion of those who read these two members jointly; namely, *that their strength is fat, and that there are no thongs unto their death*, because they are not haled to death

like prisoners. For as diseases pull down our strength, they are so many harbingers of death, to put us in mind of our frailty. And therefore they are, not without cause, compared to thongs, wherewith God tieth us to his yoke, lest our courage and strength should stir us up to licentiousness. In the second place he says that the wicked enjoy gladsome quietness, and are as it were exempted by privilege from the miseries whereunto all mankind are subject. For although afflictions involve them also as well as the good, and that God oftentimes executeth his judgments upon them, yet doth God always set some on high upon the stage to try our faith withal, in whom there appears an exemption from miseries, such as is described here. And it is a grievous temptation, to see the despisers of God repose in their delights, as though they were taken up out of the world into some heavenly nest, considering that the life of man is painful and fraught with miseries, and that their life is given them under the condition and covenant that it should be so; Gen. iii. 19.

6 *Therefore doth pride, &c.*] This complaint proceeds yet further, that although God see them shamefully and wickedly abuse his gentleness, yet he beareth with their unthankfulness and their stubbornness. And he uses a similitude of apparel, that he may shew that they glory in their evil doings. The word עֶנְק is derived from a chain. Therefore he means that the wicked glory in their frowardness and daring no less than if they were decked with a chain of gold, and that violence is to them instead of raiment, because they consider that there is the most becoming grace in it. For whereas some translate שֵׁט, *buttocks*, it is too far removed from the text. I doubt not therefore, but David, after he has begun at the head, or the neck, (for the word עֶנְק signifies also *to crown*,) meant now to comprehend the whole apparel in one word. And the effect is, that the wicked are blinded with their own prosperity, so that they become more and more insolent: and he has aptly placed pride first, and afterwards added violence as the companion of it. For whence comes it to pass that the ungodly seize and plunder on all sides, whensoever they can, and exercise such a degree of cruelty, but because they account all others nothing in comparison of themselves, nay rather, are of opinion that all mankind are born for them? therefore Pride is the mother of all violence.

7 *Their eye strouteth, &c.*] He adds that it is no marvel if the ungodly vaunt themselves so frowardly, seeing that their eyes are ready to start out of their heads for fatness and pampering of themselves. Some take it that their

eyes were choked up, and disappeared from their seat. But as fatness makes the eyes stand out, I like better to retain the proper sense of strouting: although it is to be understood, that David speaks not of the shape of the body, but metaphorically expresses the pride wherewith the ungodly are puffed up by reason of excessive fulness. For they so cram themselves with their abundance, that afterwards they are ready to burst for pride. The latter member is expounded two ways also. Some think that by the word עבר is denoted *unbridled boldness*, because the ungodly cannot hold themselves within the ordinary bounds, but mount above the clouds in their extravagant projects, even as often they consult how they may get the whole world into their own hands, or rather would fain have new worlds created for them; and finally, so insatiable are they, that they fly over heaven and earth in their vague and unbridled lusts. And it would not be inapplicable to understand it, that their foolish thoughts can by no means be ruled nor restrained within any bounds. But this other interpretation suits very well also, that their prosperous success surmounts whatsoever they conceive in their mind. And truly we see how some obtain more than they wished for, as though fortune laid nets for them even when they were asleep; according as they wittily painted king Demetrius under this idea, he who won so many cities, being otherwise neither valiant, nor vigilant, nor of great forecast. If you choose to take it so, this member shall be put in way of exposition, to shew what the said fatness is whereof he made mention before; that is to say, that God heapeth abundance of all good things upon them, more than ever they wished or thought of.

8 *They swim afloat, &c.*] Some take the word ימיקו transitively, but as the principles of grammar admit also the neuter sense, I have chosen that which suited the context best; namely, that forgetting themselves to be men, and treading all shame under foot with reckless boldness, they dissemble not their own wickedness, but rather glory openly in their extortion. And surely we see that when the wicked have been masters of their desires for any length of time, they cast off all shame, and seek not covering for their iniquity, but blurt out their own baseness with full-mouthed effrontery, after this sort: What! am not I able to despoil thee out of all that thou hast, yea, and to cut thy throat too? The same thing can robbers also do, but they hide themselves for fear. But these giants, or cyclopes, of whom David speaks, not only surmise themselves to be lawless, but also, being unmindful of their own weakness, foam out

furiously, as if there were no distinction between right and wrong. Nevertheless, if any man like to interpret it otherwise, namely, That the wicked put the simple and quiet in fear by vaunting themselves of their oppressions, I also mislike not of it. For as the simple see themselves abandoned to their lust, it cannot be but they must tremble, and as it were melt away, when they see they may do so much. Whereas he says that they *speak from aloft*, it imports as much as they pour out their spite upon all men's heads. For as proud persons, that disdain to give any man a direct look, are said in Latin *despicere*, and in Greek *καταβλέπειν*, so David brings them in speaking from aloft, because they think none good enough to keep them company. In the next verse he says they are spiteful as well towards God as men, because nothing is too high for them, but they subject both heaven and earth to their caprice. Therefore, if any man allege God's power against them, they burst through it audaciously, and as for man they anticipate no obstacle from him, and thus their proud tongue is stayed by no obstacles, but ranges through the whole earth. Now then, although it seem a hyperbolical expression, yet if we consider how unbridled their frowardness is, we must needs confess that the prophet teaches nothing but what experience shews plainly.

10 Therefore shall his people return hither; and waters of a full cup shall be wrung out to them.

11 And they say, How doth God understand? and is there knowledge in the Highest?

12 Behold, these are ungodly, and yet have they continual quietness without term of time; and they heap up riches.

13 Certainly in vain have I cleansed my heart, and washed my hands from day to day.

14 And I was scourged daily; and my chastising was every morning.

10 *Therefore shall his people, &c.*] The interpreters wrest this sentence into a diversity of shapes. First, because the relative is used without an antecedent, some take it indefinitely of the ungodly, as if it had been said that the ungodly recur ever to that reflection; and they take the word *people* for a *great rout*, because a wicked man cannot lift up his standard but he draws a great train after him. They therefore think the prophet's meaning to be, that every one of the ungodly has a great rout flocking about him; then,

that they are content to drink water in their courts, their perverse imagination bewitches them so. But much more correct and more generally received is this sense, that *the people of God return thither*. For whereas some take the word הָלוֹם for an *afflicted person*, it is constrained. But yet is it not thoroughly known what the prophet means. Some read it jointly, that *the people of God return hither*; that is, *to drain full cups of the water of sorrow*. I indeed think this verse depends on what he said above, so that the meaning is, that many who were accounted to be of God's people, are carried away with the said temptation, and are swallowed up with shipwreck. For he seems not to speak of the chosen, but only to note the counterfeit Israelites that occupy a place in the church. These, says he, are drowned in destruction, because, being beguiled with foolish envying, they bid God and godliness farewell. Nevertheless it may also be aptly referred to the elect, many of whom are so fiercely harassed by this temptation, that they turn away to devious errors: not that they give themselves over to wickedness, but because they do not continue to stand firm. The sense then will be, that not only the profane herd, but even the faithful themselves that are purposed to serve God, are driven to unlawful envying. What follows, that *waters are wrung out to them in full cup*, seems to be a rendering of the cause, inasmuch as heaviness wrings them when there appears no fruit of godliness. For *to be fed with waters to the full*, is metaphorically put for *to exhaust immeasurable woes*.

11 *And they say, &c.*] Whereas some interpreters affirm that the prophet returns to the ungodly, and reports their scoffings and blasphemies wherewith they goad themselves forward to sinning, I approve not of it. For David rather explains that which he had said in the last verse, that is, that the faithful fall into wicked imaginations, when the transitory prosperity of the ungodly dazzles their eyes; namely, because they cast doubts whether there be knowledge in God or no. As for the worldlings, this madness is too common among them. There is indeed a verse of David's which says, *I am tempted to think there are no gods*; but as we know that the poets express the common conceits of men, he avows, as it were in the person of the people, that all knowledge of God slips away as soon as any adversity happens. And they not only cast doubts whether there be a God, but they also wrangle and chide with him; for what means this saying, "Neither does Saturn's Son view these things with impartial eye," but that the woman who is not dealt with according to her heart's desire, upbraids her god Jupiter with unrighteousness?

Therefore it is too common and rife among the unbelievers to deny that God careth for the world. But here David relates that even the very faithful waver; not that they burst forth into this blasphemy, but because they cannot at once refrain themselves when God seemeth to cease from his office. Well known is this expostulation of Jeremiah, xii. 1, *Thou art righteous, O Lord, and thy judgments are right: nevertheless it comes into mind to fall out with thee because the way of the wicked is made to prosper.* Hereby it appears how the doubting of God's providence pricketh even the minds of the ungodly, but yet woundeth them not to the heart; for Jeremiah makes a protestation before, and by that means casts a bridle upon himself. Yet do they not always so speedily prevent the wiles of Satan, but that they demand in the way of doubting, How it may come to pass that God should not redress things so far out of frame, if he regard the world? Of those kind of people that wickedly brawl against God in denying his providence, there are two sorts. For some pour out their blasphemies openly, that God, giving himself to his own ease and pleasure, permitteth the rule of all things to fortune. The other sort, although they swallow up their thoughts inwardly in silence, yet fret they nevertheless, and accuse God of unrighteousness or of negligence, for winking at the wicked dealings of the ungodly, for neglecting the godly, and for suffering all things to go to havock and to wreck. But before these wicked and horrible thoughts pierce into the minds of the godly, they disburden themselves into God's bosom, and desire nothing but to rest upon his secret judgments, the reason whereof eludes their grasp. The meaning of this place therefore is, that not only the wicked attribute a blind government to fortune when they see things in disorder in the world, but also that the very faithful are shaken, so that they doubt of God's providence, but the hand of God holdeth them wonderfully up, so that they are not utterly drowned in that bottomless gulf.

12 *Behold these, &c.*] As it were in a representation, he shews what manner of envying or heart-burning it was that had almost undermined him. Behold, says he, whereas these are wicked men, yet they rest happy in their delights, and excel in power, and that not for a few days, but with a long continuing and as it were an endless course. And what is less reasonable than for God to deal bountifully with such persons as are infamous and detestable among men for their wickedness? Many mistake the word *עולם* here for *the world*; because David rather complains of the steadfast and continual prosperity of the wicked, which wears out the godly with weariness to see it last so long. Inasmuch therefore as

David sees the wicked so tenderly cherished by God, he descends to himself, and because he is conscious of his own true and upright dealing, he reasons with himself what it has profited him to follow righteousness, seeing he is miserably afflicted. For he says he is *daily scourged*, and that as often as the sun rises some annoyance or other is prepared for him, so that there is no end of his miseries. The effect is, Truly I have laboured in vain to have a pure heart and clean hands, seeing I must endure continual afflictions, which do as it were keep watch for me to greet me at daybreak: for this estate shews how there is no reward for innocence before God, for then would he handle his servants somewhat more compassionately. And forasmuch as the true uprightness of the godly consists of two parts, that is, of cleanness of heart, and of outward righteousness of works, David challenges both of them to himself. Let us also by his example learn to couple them together, and to begin first with cleanness of heart, and afterwards to testify the same by true dealing and righteousness before men.

15 If I shall say, I will declare *it* so; behold the generation of thy children: I have transgressed.

16 Although I have set my mind to know it, yet was it *but* a trouble in mine eyes.

17 Until I enter into the sanctuaries of God; *then* shall I understand the uttermost of them.

15 *If I shall, &c.*] Forasmuch as David sees that the thoughts wherewith he was tempted are froward, he puts a bridle upon himself, and reproves his own inconstancy for allowing himself to cast doubts. And although David's meaning is not doubtful, yet is there some intricacy in the words. בָּנִי signifies *to transgress* and also *to beguile*, and therefore some translate it, *I have beguiled the generation, &c.*; as if he had said, By this means I should disappoint thy children of their hope. Others translate it, *I have transgressed against the generation, &c.*; that is to say, I should do the faithful wrong. But as the prophet's words stand thus; *behold the generation of thy children: I have transgressed*; out of which there is a very good sense to be drawn, I interpret it simply thus; If I consent to wicked doubting, I do amiss, for behold, there are faithful folk still remaining in the world, and thou reservest always some people to thyself. So will there be nothing to be supplied, and the word בָּנִי will be read alone without construction. But I have

said heretofore that the word *וְנָתַתִּי* is properly referred to time. Now we perceive thoroughly what David means; namely, that when the worldlings sooth themselves in their own speculations until at length they become hardened, and shaking off the fear of God, cast away therewith the hope of salvation, the holy man bridles himself lest he should rush upon a similar precipice. *To declare* imports as much here, as to utter that which you have mused on. The sense therefore is this; If I shall give judgment as of a matter certain, it shall be a horrible offence. Therefore, whereas heretofore he hung in doubt, now he acknowledges himself to have sinned grievously: and the reason is alleged to be, because God maintaineth still some faithful people alive in the world. He seems to repeat the demonstrative particle *behold*, in way of opposition, because he had a little before said, *behold, these are wicked*. Now then, that the church which is assaulted so furiously by Satan, and by innumerable hosts of enemies, continues safe, is verily a miracle of God.

16 *And I have set, &c.*] The word *וְשָׁקַלְתִּי*, which he uses, signifies properly *to account*, and now and then *to consider* or *weigh*. Nevertheless, that which is added afterwards requires the sense which I have set down; namely, that he set or applied his mind to know it. However, though he has pronounced himself guilty of transgression, yet he confesses still that he was not quite rid of all the doubt that distracted his mind, until he entered into the sanctuary of God. For the sum of the words is this, that although he revolved the matter over and over, yet could he not by reasoning find out how God governeth the world among such sad disorders. Moreover, in speaking of himself, he admonishes men how far they may attain when they are led by their own thoughts; namely, that they sink under their trouble, because they find nothing certain or stable. For it is not to be doubted but that he matches the sanctuaries against fleshly reason. Whence it follows, that whatsoever wisdom men have of themselves, it is but vain and unsubstantial; for teachableness is to them in the place of prudence, so they hang upon God's word. Neither speaketh he of the unbelievers, who are wilfully blind, involving themselves in errors, and greedily catching hold of stumbling-blocks that may estrange them far from God. But whereas he no less modestly than earnestly applied himself to godly inquisition, and no less reverently than heedfully looked up to God's judgments; yet, notwithstanding, he confesses himself to have failed. For *trouble* in this place imports as much as unprofitable and vain labour. Whosoever, then, will be certified of God's judgments by

natural reason, he shall weary himself without profit; and therefore it behoves him to mount to a higher step. By *God's sanctuaries*, some, even of the Hebrews, understand the heavenly habitation wherein the godly souls and the angels dwell; as if he had said, Until I acknowledge that men are not created to the intent they should awhile flourish and take their pleasure in the world, but that, travelling as pilgrims, their aspirations should be to heavenward. And truly I admit no man judges aright concerning God's providence, saving he that mounts above the earth. Nevertheless, it will be a more plain and natural meaning to understand the heavenly doctrine by the name of *sanctuary*. For inasmuch as God's law was treasured up in the sanctuary, and oracles were to be fetched from thence, and this was the true way of learning, well did David put *entering into the sanctuaries*, for *coming to God's school*; as if he should say, Until God be my schoolmaster, and I learn out of his word the thing that mine own reason cannot otherwise attain to, I come short of comprehending the government of the world. Inasmuch then as we hear that men are not meet to consider the order of God's providence unless they have a further wisdom than comes of themselves, what shall our own wisdom be but obediently to embrace the thing that God teacheth, as well by his word, as by his Spirit? For although David, in the term of *sanctuary*, alludes to the outward manner of teaching which God had ordained among his people, yet he comprehends the secret enlightening of the Spirit together with the word. By *the end of them*, or by *the last of them*, he means not the end of their life, which is seen of all men; (for what should he need to enter into God's sanctuaries for that?) but this end is extended to God's judgments, by which, even when he is commonly thought to be asleep, he maketh it apparent that he doth but delay the punishments which the wicked have deserved, till convenient time come. This must be unfolded somewhat more at large. If we are desirous to learn of God in what case the ungodly stand, he answereth, that when they have awhile flourished, they suddenly wither away; and that although prosperity flow to them in a continual course even unto death, yet is the same nothing, inasmuch as the life of them is nothing. Seeing then that God assureth us that all the wicked shall come to an ill end; if he take vengeance of them openly in this life, let us bethink us of God's judgment; and if there appear no judgment upon earth, it behoves us to suspend our judgments, because the end or the last day of them is not yet come. To be brief, if we covet to profit aright in the consideration of God's works; first, we must

beseech him to open our eyes, for they do but dote, that would have good eyes and be quicksighted of themselves; and secondly, we must give credit to his word.

18 Truly thou hast set them in slippery places : thou shalt throw them down into desolation.

19 How came they to be wasted as it were in the turning of a hand ! They are perished and are consumed with dreadful fears.

20 As it were a dream after a man is awaked ? O Lord, in raising us up, thou shalt make their image despised.

18 *Truly thou hast, &c.*] David having now gone through his encounters, begins to be, as it were, a new man, and he speaks with calm composure, as it were from a high watchtower; according also as the prophet Habakkuk, ii. 1, by his own example prescribes to us this remedy in cases of trouble, *I will get me up*, says he, *into my watchtower*. David therefore shews how much it may avail to approach unto God: I see, Lord, says he, what thou doest; for although the ungodly stand up for awhile, yet are they driven about upon a slippery place, that they may fall ere long. Both the verbs are of the time past; but *the setting of them in slippery places* is understood of the present time; as if he should say they are lifted up on high, to the intent they may have a heavier fall. Truly, this seems to befall the good as well as the bad, because all the whole world is slippery. But as the faithful depend upon heaven, or rather are founded upon the power of God; although they are frail, and their estate uncertain, yet are they not said to stand in slippery places. For if they slide, yea, or fall, the Lord by putting his hand under them, stayeth them in their sliding, or else raiseth them up when they are fallen. But the slipperiness of the ungodly comes hereof, that they fix their footing in their own power, as it were upon ice, and by their insane presumption marshal themselves to a terrible downfall. Nor must we picture to our imaginations a wheel of fortune which, as it revolves, deals out everything without foresight or discrimination; but we must hold to that counsel of God which the prophet touches upon here, and which he says is revealed to all the godly in the sanctuary, to wit, the secret providence of God. Concerning which matter the readers, if they list, may see the goodly verses of Claudian, in his first book against Ruffinus.

19 *How came they, &c.*] This wonderment makes not a little to the confirmation of the former sentence. For as the prosperity of the ungodly benumbs us, yea, and makes us blockish, so the sudden destruction of them does the better awaken us, when every man is compelled to inquire how the thing came to pass, which all men thought impossible to be done. Therefore, as it were in an incredible matter, the prophet asks a question. Notwithstanding, he warns us therewith, that God worketh daily in suchwise, that there is just occasion for us to wonder, if we wanted not eyes. Nay rather, if we would by faith look forward to God's judgments afar off, there could nothing happen that should be strange, or hard to be believed. For wondering springs from lack of understanding. When he says that *the wicked are consumed of dreadful fears*, it admits a two-fold sense; either that God thundereth against them in such unaccustomed manner, as for the strangeness thereof strikes fear into them; or else that God, although he lay not to his hand, doth with the mere terror of his breath alone strike his enemies dead, and bring them to nought; when notwithstanding they recklessly despise all dangers, as if they were out of all danger, and were in a league with death; according as we have seen them brought in heretofore, exclaiming in wanton arrogance, *Who is our Lord?* Psalm xii. 5. The reason that leads me to embrace rather the former sense, is this; that when God seeth us so slow to consider his judgments, then, to correct our dulness, he executeth violent judgments, and persecuteth the ungodly by unaccustomed means, as though he would shake the earth.

20 *As it were a dream, &c.*] This similitude is often met with in the scriptures, as Isaiah, xxix. 7, says, *That the enemies of the church shall be like a dream in the night.* But to allege other places were tedious and needless. But it agrees most fitly with the present place. For whence comes so great wonderment at the prosperity of the ungodly but because our minds are possessed with drowsiness? To be brief, we surmise them to be blessed and happy, just as we dream of kingdoms that we never saw, when we are asleep. For as for those that are awake through the enlightening of God's word, although the ungodly seem to shine in their eyes, yet are they held back by a brightness of an opposite kind, which far surpasses it. The prophet therefore bids us awake, that we may see how all is but mere vanity which we gaze at in this world; like as he himself, returning now to his right mind, acknowledges himself to have dreamt and doted before. And he adds the reason,

because *God shall make their image despised and reproachful*. In my judgment, some mistake this word *image* when they understand it of the soul of man, because it is made after the image of God; whereas the prophet does but simply mock the outward pomp which dazzles men's eyes, and at the same moment flees away; according also, as in Psalm xxxix. 7, we saw how *man passeth away in an image*, which imports as much as to flow away like water, wherein there is no solidity; or rather, like the shape that is reflected in a glass, and yet has no substance at all. *Image*, therefore, in this place, signifies, as we ordinarily term it, outward shew. And so the prophet indirectly reproves our fondness, in that we form to ourselves illusions out of nothing. The portion *בְּעִיר* signifies, properly, *in the city*. But as this would be frigid, many discreetly deem it to import as much as the word *בְּהֵעִיר*, which is also gathered from the point *kametz*. And so it is to be translated *in raising*, that is to say, when these dreams which delude us are passed over. And this comes to pass not only when God bringeth troubled matters to tolerable order, but also when he chaseth away darkness, and maketh our minds clear and lightsome. Now, then, although a man can never see things so well settled in the world as were to be wished, because God, to cherish our hope, delayeth the perfect state to the last day of judgment, yet as often as he stretcheth out his hand against the ungodly, there shineth to us a certain dawning of the day, lest denser darkness should involve us in deep sleep. Some draw this saying to the last judgment; as if David had said that the ungodly excel in riches and authority in this world, and that this night of confusion continues even till God raiseth up the dead. Although this be a profitable lesson, yet has it no place here, because it is utterly beside the text. If any one like better to read, *thou shalt make their image despised in the city*, the sense will be, that God's vengeance shall not be hidden when he shall turn the honour of the wicked to reproach. But this shall be done openly, that all men may see it, as it were in the crowded square of a city. But the word *raising*, or *awakening*, will agree better, which is put in contrast with *dreaming*.

21 For my heart glowed, and I was pricked in my reins.

22 And I was foolish and ignorant; I was as a beast with thee.

23 Yet was I always with thee; thou heldest my right hand.

24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and at length take me up into glory.

21 *For my heart glowed, &c.*] Again he repeats the confession that he had made before; namely, that through the sting of unholy jealousies which he felt in his heart, he fell to wrangling angrily with God. He compares his choler to leaven. Others translate it; *that his heart was steeped in vinegar*. But it suits better, *that his heart was eager, or swollen*, like leavened dough; like as also, in Plautus, a woman that swelled for anger is said to be all in a ferment. Others read it, *my reins were pricked through*, and they will have the letter נ in the beginning of the word to be put instead of the letter ה, which makes small difference in the matter. And we know that the word כליית, (by which name the Hebrews term *the reins*;) is derived from כלה, which signifies *to lust*, or *long after* a thing, because they assign the reins as the seat of lusts. Therefore he says that he was pricked with troublesome thoughts, as it had been with thorns. Now, from whence this fierce heart-burning came upon David, I have told already. For many worldly men, who, although they deny not that the world is governed by heavenly providence, do not, however, greatly disquiet themselves, but laugh at the illusions of fortune. But the more the faithful are persuaded that God is judge of the world, the more are they grieved when he answereth not their desires. But David, soon after chastising himself sharply, as reason was, first of all calls himself fool; and, secondly, blames his own ignorance; and, thirdly, says he was no better than the brute beasts. If he had only acknowledged his own ignorance, it might have been demanded whence came the vice or default? Therefore he ascribes it to his own foolishness, which he aggravates the more by comparing himself to brute beasts. The effect then is, that the unholy heart-burning whereof he has made mention took its beginning from ignorance and error; and that he himself was to blame for erring, because he played the fool, being lost to reason; and that not after an ordinary manner, but even to a degree of brutish insensibility. For although it be true, as I said before, that men never give right judgment upon God's works, because all the faculties they have are too weak to consider them, yet does David worthily lay the fault upon himself, because he degenerated from human reason to senseless beasts. Howbeit, as often as we mislike the manner of God's providence in governing the world, let us call to mind that it comes to pass through the defect of our understanding. The portion עמך is taken here, in the way

of comparison, for *before thee*; as if he had said, Lord, although I have seemed in some respect to excel in the world, yet in respect of thy heavenly wisdom I have been no better than a brute beast. And he has not put in this portion in vain; for how comes it to pass that men are so besotted in their own folly, but because while each man looks at other, all of them flatter and sooth themselves. For every man seems to himself to have one eye among them that are blind; at least he is content with this one thing, that the rest are not a bit wiser than he. But when they come to God, that common error of theirs, wherein they reposed, is dissipated.

23 *Yet was I always with thee, &c.*] Here he says he was *with God* in another sense. For he gives him thanks for holding him up when he was so liable to tumble headlong, that he fell not quite away from him. And the greatness of this grace is the more illustrated by that confession of his, that he was beside himself, yea and a very brute beast: for double and treble was he worthy to have been cast away, since he durst murmur against God. But men are said to be *with God* two ways; namely, either by mind and thought, when they believe that they live under his eyes, and are ruled by his hand, and maintained by his power; or else when God, by his secret bridle, holdeth them in at such time as they wander and go astray, and suffereth them not to be utterly estranged from him. Therefore, whosoever imagines that God hath no care of him, he is not *with God*, to his own understanding, but yet God's secret grace abideth with him, because he is not forsaken. Lastly, God is always near at hand to his chosen, because though they turn their backs upon him, yet doth he always pursue them with his fatherly kindness. By God's *taking him by the right hand*, he denotes that he was by God's wonderful power pulled back from that deep gulf into which the reprobates cast themselves. Therefore, that David restrained himself from bursting into open blasphemies, and from hardening in his error, and also that he condemned himself of foolishness, he imputes wholly to the grace of God, who stretched out his hand and stayed him up from falling headlong. And hereby we see how precious our salvation is to God, in that when we wander far from him, yet casteth he a careful eye upon us, and reacheth out his hand to gather us in together. Indeed this must not be pretended for a cloak of slothfulness; but yet experience teaches that God regardeth us even when we are sunk in torpor, and that he is near us even when we are runaways and stragglers. And the force of the metaphor is to be noted, when he is said *to hold him by the*

right hand; for there is no temptation so light which would not easily overthrow us if we were not upheld by the power of God. Then that we quail not even in the sorest encounters, comes not of aught but the help of the Holy Ghost. Not that he always manifesteth his power visibly in us, for he oftentimes perfecteth it in our weakness, but it is enough that he succoureth them that are ignorant and blind, upholdeth them that are falling, and lifteth them up even when they are fallen.

24 *Thou shalt guide me, &c.*] As the verbs are of the future tense, I take the natural sense to be this: Lord, seeing I am now brought once again into the way, by thy leading, thou wilt also proceed to rule me hereafter, until I may at length be taken up into thy glory. For we know it is an ordinary matter with David, as soon as he has given thanks, to conceive hope for the time to come. Therefore, after he has acknowledged his own infirmities, and commended God's helpful grace which he had had experience of, then he puts himself in hope of the continuance of the same towards him. *Guiding by counsel* is put in the foremost place, because, although fools and inconsiderate persons have now and then good success in their affairs; because God salveth our errors, and turneth the things to good end which were ill begun; yet is it his ordinary and more pregnant blessing to give his servants wisdom; and we must especially desire him to govern us with the spirit of counsel and judgment. For whosoever dares attempt anything upon trust of his own wisdom, shall be brought to shame with this rashness of his, because he takes upon him the thing that is peculiar to God. For if it behoved David to have God for his guide, how much more need have we of the same guide? Afterwards, to *counsel* is annexed *glory*, which in my judgment must not be restrained to the eternal life, as some would have it, but comprehends the whole course of our prosperity and welfare, from the beginning of it, which is seen here upon earth, even unto the end which we hope for in heaven. David then promises himself eternal glory through God's free favour, and yet he excludes not the blessings that he plieth his servants with upon earth, so that they may feel some foretaste of felicity even here.

25 Whom have I in heaven? And with thee have I wished none upon earth.

26 My flesh hath fainted, and my heart also: God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for evermore.

27 For, lo, they that depart from thee shall perish : thou hast destroyed all those that go a whoring from thee.

28 As for me, it doth me good to draw near unto God : I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may shew forth all thy works.

25 *Whom have I, &c.*] He declares more plainly how much he had profited in God's sanctuary, inasmuch as holding himself content with him alone, he rejects whatsoever things offer themselves besides him. The manner of speaking which he uses in joining together an interrogation and an affirmation is harsh in other tongues, but common among the Hebrews. In the sense there is no ambiguity ; for David's meaning is, that he wishes nothing in heaven or in earth besides God, and that all other things which allure men unto them are unattractive without him. And surely then hath God his due glory among us, when we are not carried hither and thither, but hold ourselves satisfied with him alone. But if we set never so little of our affection upon creatures, so far forth do we defraud God of his due honour. And yet nothing has been more common in all ages, neither is more common at this day, than this traitorousness. For how few are there that hold their affections confined to God alone ! We see how many companions superstition wins. For although the papists confess that all things depend upon God, yet do they call in innumerable by-helps here and there besides. Others, being puffed up with pride, thrust in either themselves or others as helpfellowes with God. Wherefore so much the more diligently is this doctrine to be noted, that it is not lawful for us to seek to any but only unto God. And although by the names of *heaven* and *earth* he denotes whatsoever men can imagine, yet he seems to note the two kinds distinctly. Therefore, in saying that *he seeks to none in heaven save only God*, he rejects all the counterfeit gods with which the common error and folly of the world fill heaven. And in that he denies himself to *wish any in earth*, I take it to be meant of the deceits wherewith almost all the whole world makes itself drunk. For those that are not beguiled with that former artifice of Satan to forge to themselves false gods, either deceive themselves by overweening, while upon trust of their own cunning, or strength, or wit, they take upon them that which belongs to God alone, or else lure themselves with deceitful enticements, while they lean upon the favour of men, and trust to their own riches or other helps. There-

fore the only way to seek God is not to be drawn away through various by-roads, but to shake off all superstition and pride, and to betake us direct to God alone. For this part, *and with thee have I had mind to none*, imports as much as if he had said, Because I know indeed that thou only art enough and sufficient for me, I am not carried away after sundry desires, but settle myself upon thee. And that we may be satisfied with the one God, it is expedient for us to know what fulness of good things he bringeth us.

26 *My flesh hath fainted, &c.*] Some take the former part of the verse thus; that David's flesh and heart failed him through the earnestness of longing; and so they think he testifies how earnestly he lifted up his mind unto God. Now though a similar manner of speaking is to be met with in other places, yet that which is added immediately after, namely, *The Lord is the strength of my heart*, seems to require another sense. I rather think there is an antithesis between the faintness that David felt in himself, and the strength that was ministered to him by God; as if he should have said, Although I am nothing as long as I am separated from God, and all which I am able to do ends in nothing, yet in coming to him I find store of strength. And it is a very necessary thing to consider what we are without God, because no man will cast himself wholly upon God but he who, feeling himself to faint, despairs of his own ability. For we seek not aught at God's hand but that which is wanting in ourselves. All men confess, and the greater part think it enough, if God succour our infirmities, or relieve our want. Much fuller is David's confession, when he lays his own nothingness, as I may term it, before God. And therefore he does well to add *that God is his portion*. By which similitude the scripture signifies the lot wherewith each man is content. And whereas this is assigned to God, it behoves us to know that the reason is because he alone sufficeth abundantly of himself, and because perfect happiness consists in him. Whence it follows that we are unthankful, if we bend our minds anywhere else, according as is said in Ps. xvi. 4, in which place David explains the reason of the metaphor more clearly. As for the quibble of some, that God is termed our portion because we have received our soul from him; I know not how so fond a device should come in their head, for it is as far from David's meaning as heaven is from the earth, and involves the wild notion of the Manicheans wherewith Servetus was bewitched. But it happens for the most part, that men who are not exercised in the scriptures, and endued with true divinity, blunder in the first principles, although skilful

in the Hebrew tongue. And although in the name of *heart* he comprehends the whole soul, yet means he not that the substance of the soul itself fails, but that all the powers thereof are weakened which it obtains not but of God's liberality, and holds dependent on his will.

27 *For lo, &c.*] He proves by reference to the opposite that nothing is better than to rest simply upon the one God, because as soon as any one departs from him, horrible destruction awaits him. And we must know that all depart from him who divide and disperse their hope among a variety of objects. To the same refers the word *whoring*, for it is the worst kind of adultery, to divide our heart, that it should not abide fast in the only one God. Which will be more easily perceived, if we define the spiritual chastity of our mind to consist in faith, in calling upon God, in soundness of heart, and in obedience to the word. Whosoever then submits not himself to the word of God, so that he take him to be the only author of all good things, depending upon him, yielding himself to him to be governed by him, fleeing always to him, and devoting all his affections to him, he is like an adulterous woman who leaves her own husband, and gives herself over to strangers. Therefore it is the same as though David should denounce all apostates as adulterers.

28 *As for me, &c.*] Word for word it is, *And I*. But David, speaking expressly of himself, affirms that although he see the whole world estranged from God by wandering errors, yet he himself will always abide under God's hand. Let others come to nought, says he, if their headiness cannot be restrained but that they will needs run after the deceits of the world; *as for me*, I will abide steadfastly in this purpose of maintaining holy communion with God. Soon after he adds the manner of approaching or drawing near, that is to say, when our affiance rests in him. For God will not else withhold us, unless we are fully persuaded that we cannot otherwise stand fast than by his grace. And this place is to be noted, to the end that when all the world slide away into unbelief, the evil example thereof carry us not away into licentiousness as well as them, and that we may learn to confine ourselves to God alone. In the end he intimates that after the time he have once consecrated himself to God alone, he shall never want occasion of praising him, and that because he never frustrateth the hope of his servants. Whence it follows that none rail or murmur against God, but such as wilfully overcast themselves with clouds, lest by espying his providence they should betake themselves to his guardianship and protection.

PSALM LXXIV.

The saints bewail the desolation of the church, which had brought the name of Israel almost to destruction. But although it appears by their humble petitions, that they ascribe to their own sins whatsoever evils they sustain, yet do they urge God with his own covenant, by which he adopted the offspring of Abraham to himself. Afterwards they call to mind how mightily and gloriously he had shewn forth his power in delivering his church. And thereupon conceiving hope, they pray God at length to relieve and redress their forlorn and lamentable estate.

[*An Instruction of Asaph.*]

1 O God, why hast thou put us away for ever? shall thy wrath smoke against the flock of thy pastures?

2 Think upon thy congregation, *which* thou hast possessed of old, which thou hast redeemed, the rod of thine inheritance; *and upon* this mount Sion, wherein thou hast dwelled.

3 Lift up thy strokes to destroy for ever every enemy that worketh evil to thy sanctuary.

4 Thine adversaries have roared in the midst of thy sanctuaries, and set up their banners for signs.

5 He that lifted the axes upon the rough timber was renowned for bringing it to excellent perfection.

6 And now they break down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers.

7 They have burnt down thy sanctuaries to the ground; they have defiled the dwelling-place of thy name.

8 They have said in their heart, Let us destroy them together. They have burned all the tabernacles of God in the land.

[*An Instruction of Asaph.*] The title מִשְׁכֵּל agrees very well with the argument. For although it is now and then applied to matters of mirth, according as has been seen in Psalm xlv, yet for the most part it gives us to understand that the subject treated of concerns God's judgments, whereby men are compelled to descend into themselves, and to

examine their own sins, that they may humble themselves before God. Now, that the Psalm was not of David's enditing, is easy to gather from the contents, because there was no such overthrow and destruction of the church for him to bewail in his time. They that think otherwise allege that David by the spirit of prophecy foreshewed that which was not yet come to pass. But as it is probable that many of the Psalms were composed by sundry authors after David's death, I doubt not but this was one of the number of them. Notwithstanding, it is not very certain of what calamity he treats here. There are two opinions. For some refer it to the destruction of the city and the temple, at such time as the people were led away captive to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar. And others refer it to the defiling of the temple that happened under Antiochus. Each of them has some colour. Chiefly the latter, because the faithful complain here that they are now destitute of signs and prophets, whereas it is sufficiently known that many prophets flourished at such time as the people were led away into captivity. Again, because it is said a little before, that the sanctuaries were burnt up, the carved works destroyed, and nothing was left whole, it agrees not with the cruelty and tyranny of Antiochus. For although he shamefully defiled the temple with the superstitions of the heathen, yet the building remained entire, and the timber and stones were not at that time consumed with fire. Some allege that by the sanctuaries are meant the synagogues wherein their holy assemblies were wont to be held, not only at Jerusalem but also in the rest of the cities of Judah. It may be also that the faithful, beholding the horrible profanation of the temple, took warning at so sorrowful a sight, to cast the eyes of their minds back to the former fire with which it was consumed by the Chaldeans, and so comprised two destructions in one. And thus the conjecture will be more probable, that these complaints belong to the time of Antiochus, because then the church of God was without prophets. Still if any man like rather to refer it to the captivity of Babylon, the solution of this knot will be easy, because although Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, were then alive, yet they held their peace for a time as though they had finished the course of their calling, until at length, a little before the day of their deliverance, Daniel came abroad again to encourage the banished people to return. Whereunto Isaiah, xl. 1, seems to have an eye in these words, *Comfort ye my people, comfort ye my people, shall your God say.* For the verb of the future tense denotes that silence was enjoined the prophets for a time.

1 O God, why hast thou, &c.] If this complaint were

written in the captivity of Babylon, although Jeremiah had before appointed the threescore and tenth year for their delivery, yet it is no wonder though the weariness of so long delay were a most bitter affliction to them, so that they daily sighed and groaned, and thought so long a space equal to an eternity. And as for those that endured the cruelty of Antiochus, as they had no time limited to them, they had good cause to complain of God's perpetual wrath, especially considering that without hope of comfort they saw the cruelty of their enemies daily increase, and their own estate wax daily worse. For being heretofore worn with many unfortunate wars, which their neighbours had waged against them from time to time, they were come at that time well-near to utter destruction. And it is to be noted that the faithful, being vexed by the heathen nations, did nevertheless lift up their eyes to God, as though his hand alone laid those punishments upon them. For they knew that the heathen nations would not have been allowed to vent their rage against them unless God had been displeased. Wherefore, persuading themselves that they made not war against flesh and blood, but were justly punished by God's rightful judgment, they consider the cause and fountain of all their miseries to be, because God, under whose favour they had lived heretofore happily, had cast them off, and vouchsafed not to reckon them any more in his flock. For the word *נָתַן* signifies *to reject* and *detest*, and sometimes also *to withdraw* one's self afar off, and it makes no great matter which way you take it in this place. Let it suffice to hold this for the effect, that as often as we are pinched with adversities, the shafts of fortune are not thrown at us at a venture by fortune, but these things are raised up by God's secret determination, as whips or rods wherewith to chastise our sins. But mark, this *rejecting* and *wrath* must be referred to the understanding of the flesh. For although, to speak properly, God is not angry with his elect, whose disease he cureth by afflictions as it were by medicines, yet as the very feeling of the pains makes us to understand what his wrath is, the Holy Ghost by the term *anger* putteth the faithful in mind of their own guilt. Therefore, whensoever God executeth his vengeance upon us, it is our part to consider what we have deserved; and to think that, although God be not touched with any emotion of anger, yet it is not owing to us that our sins might not have provoked him to sore displeasure, and set him on fire against us. Furthermore, to the intent they may gain mercy, they flee to the remembrance of the covenant whereby they were adopted to be his children. For in calling themselves *the flock of God's pastures*, they

commend his free election, whereby they were separated from the Gentiles, which they express more plainly in the next verse.

2 *Think upon thy, &c.*] They boast themselves to have been the peculiar people of God, not for their own deserving, but by the grace of adoption. To the same purpose pertains their antiquity, in that it was not a few months ago that they came under God's government, but they had succeeded to it by inheritance. For the more ages he had continued his love towards the seed of Abraham, the better was their faith established. They rehearse, therefore, how they had been God's people from the beginning; namely, ever since God had made his inviolable league with Abraham. Also there is added the redemption, wherewith the adoption was ratified: for God did then ratify his own sovereignty, not only by word, but also by deed. These benefits of God they set before themselves as matter of confidence, and allege them before God, the very author of them, that he should not forsake his own work. Also, upon trust of the same, they immediately call themselves *the rod of his inheritance*; that is to say, the heritage which he hath measured out for himself. For as they were wont to mark the limits of grounds with poles, as with lines, he alludes to that custom. Now then, although some had rather translate the word שבט, *a tribe*, yet I prefer this other metaphor, that God, by the secret marking out of his own good pleasure, as it were by a ten-foot rod, separated Israel from the other nations, to be his own proper ground. Last of all is put the temple wherein God had promised that he would dwell; not that his being was enclosed in that place, as has been said frequently already, but because the faithful felt him near at hand and present with them in that place by his power and grace. Now we understand whereupon the people took heart to pray; namely, God's free election, promises, and worship, delivered to them.

3 *Lift up thy strokes, &c.*] Now, on the other part, they pray for deadly vengeance on their enemies, according as they cruelly raged against the sanctuary of God; as if they should say that no mean punishment was enough for such ungodly and sacrilegious fury, and therefore that such as had behaved themselves so spitefully against the temple and people of God, were to be destroyed without hope of recovery, because their wickedness was desperate. Moreover, as the Holy Ghost endited this form of praying, we gather therefrom the immeasurable love of God towards us, in that he will so severely punish the wrongs that are done to us; and, secondly, what great account he maketh of the wor-

shipping of his godhead, the violation whereof he persecuteth so sore. As concerning the words, some translate פְּעָמַי, *feet*, or *steps*, and gather this sense from it; Lord, lift up thy feet, and come flying apace to strike the enemies. Others translate it *hammers*, which agrees aptly; nevertheless, I have not scrupled to follow the opinion of those that refer it to the act of striking, and to the very strokes themselves. The latter member is expounded otherwise by some, namely, that the enemy had corrupted all things in the sanctuary. But because this manner of construction is nowhere to be met with, I would not depart from the allowed and received translation.

4 *Thine adversaries, &c.*] They liken their enemies to lions, for the purpose of marking the cruelty which they complain they executed even in the very sanctuaries of God. I had rather in this place understand the temple than the synagogues. For it is no absurdity that the temple also is called here in the plural number *sanctuaries*, as it is also often called elsewhere, because it was divided into three parts: although, if any prefer to understand it of the synagogues, I will not strive against him. Nay, truly there is no reason to the contrary, but that it may be extended to the whole land which God had hallowed to himself. But the more emphatic is the other, that the fury of the enemies raged with such indiscriminate violence, that they spared not even the temple of God. His expression, *They have set up their banners*, serves to mark their contemptuousness; namely, that by setting up trophies they triumphed even over God himself. For when some refer it to magical divinations, according as Nebuchadnezzar, by the witness of Ezekiel, xxi. 21, sought counsel from the flight of birds, it is too confined a sense. But the former sense will fit the place very well; for whosoever entered into the Holy Land, knew that the peculiar worship of God flourished there; and the temple was as it were a token of God's presence, as if he should have displayed his banners to keep that people in order under him. With these banners, which separated the people of God from the heathen nations, the prophet now contrasts the sacrilegious banners brought into the temple by the enemies. And therefore, in reiterating the word, he aggravates the indignity of their act, in that the enemies having thrown down the ensigns of godliness, had set up strange symbols in their stead.

5 *He that lifted up, &c.*] By this circumstance the prophet again aggravates still more the barbarous and brutal cruelty of the enemies, in that they savagely pulled in pieces a building reared at such cost, embellished with such

splendour and beauty, and finished with such labour and art. In the words there is some ambiguity : notwithstanding the most received sense is this, that when the temple was to be built, the hewers of timber were renowned and famous. Some take the word מְבִיא actively, and expound it that they were famous and renowned, as though they offered sacrifices to God. And the roughness of the trees is contrasted with the polished beams, that it may the better appear with what exquisite art they had brought the unwrought and rough timber to such perfection of beauty. Or else, which I like better, the prophet means that there was diligent search made among the thick and tangled woods, that no tree should be hewn but such as was excellent. What if you take it thus, that in those thick woods the trees to which the axe was to be put were known and well marked, as though they were placed on high and open to the eyes of beholders. There can be no doubt that in this verse he commends the excellence of the timber, because such was selected as might attract the gaze of all men, according as in the beginning of the next verse, by the carved or graven works he means the form itself, which was finished with unequalled art. And now he says that the Chaldeans, with utter recklessness, did set upon that so glorious a building with axes and hammers, as though in defacing so magnificent a structure they had purposed to tread God's glory under their feet. Afterwards he complains of the burning of the temple, whereby it was utterly razed, whereas it was but half defaced with their tools. Many, because they saw there could no good sense be obtained from the words, thought the order transposed, and therefore resolve it thus, *They have set fire upon thy sanctuaries*. But, although the accent is against it, I doubt not that the sense which I have set down is the genuine one; namely, that the temple was burnt down to the ground with fire. And this verse confirms the better that the temple is termed *sanctuaries* in the plural number, by reason of the three parts of it, that is to wit, the innermost chancel, the sanctuary which was in the midst, and the court of the temple: for soon after follows *the dwelling-place of thy name*. But the name of God is employed, not that we might know that his being was comprehended within the temple, but that he dwelt there, by his power and working, that the people should call upon him in that place with the greater confidence. And that the prophet may the better express the horribleness of their cruelty, he represents them encouraging one another to observe no bounds in spoiling. As though, says he, they were not minded enough of themselves to do mischief, each of them

spurs forward his fellow to waste and destroy the whole people of God without exception. In the end he says that all the synagogues of God were set on fire. For so I think it good to translate the word מועדים, because there is added a general mark, and the prophet names expressly all the sanctuaries of the whole land; for coldly do some expound it, that because they could not do any hurt or harm to God's sanctuary in heaven, they turned their fury upon his earthly temple or his synagogues. For the prophet simply complains that the enemies were so bent to blot out God's name, that they left no corner undefaced. And not amiss, according to the etymology of the word, does he transfer the name of מועדים, which is for the most part understood of the sanctuary, to those places where holy assemblies were wont to be held, not only for the reading and expounding of the prophets, but also to call upon the name of God; as if he should say the ungodly had omitted nothing whereby they might utterly extinguish the true worship of God in Judah.

9 We see not our signs: there is no prophet any more: nor any with us that knoweth how long.

10 O God, how long shall the adversary work reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?

11 How long wilt thou withdraw thy hand, and thy right hand? in the midst of thy bosom consume them.

12 But God is my King from the beginning, working salvation in the midst of the earth.

9 *We see not our signs, &c.*] The faithful enhance the grievousness of their miseries in that there was no consolation to relieve it. For this is the one great means of cheering the minds of the godly, when God putteth them in hope of reconciliation, by promising, even in the midst of his wrath, that he will be mindful of his mercy. Some restrain these signs to the miracles by which God had in old time testified that he would still be favourable to his people whom he scourged. But rather the faithful complain that the signs of favour are taken from them, in that God had after a sort hid his face from them; as if they should say they were overwhelmed with darkness, because God shone not upon them after his accustomed manner, according as we commonly say that the signs of love or hatred are shewn us. In substance they complain, not only that the time is cloudy and dim, but also

that they lie in thick darkness, so that there appears not so much as one spark of light. And forasmuch as the chief sign was, to be promised deliverance by the prophets, therefore he bewails that there is no more any prophet to foresee some end of their miseries. Whereby we gather, that the office of comforting was enjoined the prophets, to lift up with hope of mercy the hearts that were cast down with sorrow. Indeed we know they were preachers and witnesses of God's wrath, to compel the stiff-necked and rebellious to repentance by threatenings and terrors. But had they simply denounced God's vengeance, their doctrine, which was ordained for the welfare of the people, had turned to nothing but destruction. Therefore to them was committed the foretelling of the issue to come: for under temporal punishments is set forth God's fatherly chastisement which mitigates heaviness, whereas his continual displeasure would strike the miserable sinners dead. Wherefore we also, if we seek matter of patience and comfort, when God chastiseth us must learn to fix our eyes upon this moderation whereby God allureth us to hope, and thereby assure ourselves that God is not so angry that he ceaseth to be a father: and correction that brings deliverance, contains joy mixed with heaviness. This is the mark that all the prophets had a care to level their doctrine at; for although they often deal roughly and rigorously to subdue the stubbornness of the people by fear, yet add they comfort immediately after, which would be no comfort at all without hope of deliverance. Nevertheless, here is raised a question, whether God, minding to assuage the grief of his scourging, did always determine the number of years and days. I answer, that although the prophets have not always certainly defined the times, yet they often warranted deliverance to be near at hand, and all of them spoke of the future restitution of the church. If any man take exception again that the afflicted people did amiss in that they applied not to themselves, the general promises which we are sure belonged alike to all ages, I answer, that as God was wont to annex tidings of deliverance to every affliction, seeing that now no prophet appears expressly sent, the people complain not without cause, that the signs of favour fail to which they were accustomed. For until the coming of Christ it was very needful that the memorial of the promised deliverance should be renewed in every age, that the faithful might in all their affliction know themselves to be still regarded of God.

10 *O God, how long, &c.*] Their meaning is, that nothing grieves them more than when they see God's name blas-

phemed by the ungodly. And by this form of praying, the prophet minded to kindle in our hearts a zeal to maintain the glory of God. And verily, as we are naturally too dainty and tender in bearing adversities, this is a true trial of godliness, if the dishonour of God grieve and disquiet us more than all we suffer. No doubt the Jews were many ways scorned and assailed with more kinds of reproach than one, under that most cruel tyrant and barbarous nation. And yet the prophet, speaking in the person of the whole church, makes in a manner no reckoning of the despite that was cast upon the heads of the people, in comparison of the horrible blasphemies against God, according to this text of Psalm lxxix. 10, *the revilings of them that reviled thee are fallen upon me*. The word *evermore* is added again, because long impunity hardens the ungodly to boldness, especially when they rail at God and he maketh as though he saw it not. And therefore immediately after, he adds, *How long, O God, wilt thou withdraw thy hand?* Now although what the prophet intends is not ambiguous, yet do the interpreters vary about the words. Some by the word *hand* in the forepart of the verse, understand the left hand, but it is mere trifling, for rather by the term *right hand* he does but repeat the same thing, according to his custom. Some translate the word כַּלָּה, in the end of the verse, *prohibit*; as though the prophet should say, Stretch out thy hand at length, which hath held itself too long in thy bosom. But without any colour of reason, they take refuge in a forced sense. They that translate it *consume*, take *the midst of God's bosom* allegorically for his temple; which exposition I like not. Much more correctly shall the interrogation be continued to the last word, in thiswise: How long wilt thou withdraw thy hand? What? wilt thou withdraw thy hand from the midst of thy bosom? Consume these ungodly ones therefore that despise thee so proudly. Also we may with propriety, take it after this manner; Although thine enemies surmise thee to be slothful and idle, because thou bestirrest thee not, nor liftest up thy hand openly, yet make them feel that thou art able enough to destroy them, even with thy beck alone, though thou move not so much as one finger.

12 *But God is my King, &c.*] Here, as we see done in divers other places, they intermingle musings with their prayers, thereby to give renewed vigour to their faith, and to stir up themselves to more earnestness in praying. For we know how hard a matter it is to rise above all doubtings, so that we may with unimpeded and free course fearlessly persist in praying. Here, therefore, the faithful call to mind

the examples of God's mercy and might, whereby he has from time to time, through all ages, avouched himself to be the king of his chosen people. And by this example we are taught, that seeing it is not enough to make prayer with the lips, unless we pray with faith also, we must always call back our minds to the benefits whereby God hath confirmed his fatherly love towards us, which must be witnesses unto us of his election. For the title of king which the prophet attributes to God, appears not only to be restrained to his sovereignty, but also to this, that he had taken upon him the charge of that people, to maintain them in safety and unharmed. What the part *from the beginning* imports I have told you already. By the *midst of the earth* some think that Judah is denoted, because it was situate as it were in the middle of the habitable world. But it is well known that it is taken for a place that stands in sight; as when it was said to Pharaoh, *I will be known to be God in the midst of the earth*, Exod. viii. 22. Therefore the plain meaning is, that many manifest deliverances had been exhibited to the elect people as it were upon a conspicuous stage.

13 Thou, in thy power, hast divided the sea: thou hast broken the heads of the dragons upon the waters.

14 Thou brakest the head of leviathan in pieces, and madest him meat for thy people in the wilderness.

15 Thou hast divided the fountain and the river: thou hast dried up mighty streams.

16 Thine is the day, thine also is the night: thou hast ordained the light, and the sun.

17 Thou hast pitched all the bounds of the earth: thou hast made the summer and the winter.

13 *Thou, in thy power, &c.*] The prophet gathers together certain kinds of deliverance that were most notable; though they all pertain to the first deliverance, whereby God rescued his people from the tyranny of Egypt. Afterwards, he will come down to the general commendation of God's grace, which is shed abroad into all the world. And so from the special grace which God hath vouchsafed to his own church, he passes to the goodwill which he bears towards all mankind: first, he says that he *divided or cut the sea*. Some think the next member to be subjoined, in respect that

God had killed the whales and other great fishes by drying up the sea. But I am of opinion that Pharaoh and his army are denoted, by way of metaphor; because such manner of speaking is very rife among the prophets, especially when they treat of the Egyptians, whose land was washed by a sea abounding with fish and divided by the Nile. Not without cause therefore is Pharaoh termed *leviathan*, by reason of the advantages of the sea, because he reigned there, as a whale in the water. Moreover, as the end to which God exerted his power at that time in delivering his people, was that the church should trust that he would be the continual preserver of their welfare, this ensample was not to be restrained to that one age alone. And therefore with good cause it is applied to those that come after, that they may confirm their faith by the same. Now then, although he reckon not up all the miracles that God wrought in the going forth of the people out of Egypt, yet by the figure synecdoche he comprehends whatsoever Moses has declared more at large. Whereas he says that *leviathan* became meat to the Israelites, yea and that in the wilderness, it is an apposite allusion to the destruction of Pharaoh; as if he should say, then was corn laid up for the people to feed upon, because by the slaughter of their enemies, quietness prolonged their life as though it had been meat. And by the wilderness he means not the countries on the seacoast, though they are barren and droughty, but the deserts that were far from the sea. In the verse following he pursues the same matter, where he says that the fountain was divided; that is, when water was struck out of the rock. Finally, he adds that the streams were dried; that is, at such time as God, turning back the stream of Jordan, made way for his people to pass over. For there is no reason at all in the interpretation of those who would have לִיָּתָן to be a proper name.

16 *Thine is the day, &c.*] He comes down to the benefits of God that pertain in common to all mankind. For after he has commenced with the special graces, whereby God shewed himself to be the father of his elect people; now, in due season, he avouches him to be beneficent to all men. And by these words he gives us to understand that it is not chance that makes the days and nights to succeed each other in unvarying alternations, but that this order was settled beforehand by the appointment of God; and the reason is added, namely, because God hath given the sun both power and charge to illumine the earth. For as soon as the prophet had spoken of light, he added the sun as the chief vehicle thereof. Now then, as God's incomparable

goodness towards men shineth forth manifestly in this order, the prophet does not amiss to draw matter of trust from the same. To the same purpose serves that which follows concerning the marking out of the bounds of the earth, and the recurring interchange of summer and winter. Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether he mean the uttermost coasts of the world or the particular borders wherewith each country is bounded from other. For although they are disturbed through the violence of men, while insatiable covetousness and ambition break through every distinction that exists in the world, yet doth God's singular goodness shine herein, that he hath allotted to each nation a dwelling-place of their own. Notwithstanding, I rather take it to mean those bounds which cannot be confounded at the pleasure of men; that is, that God hath appointed men room upon the earth so much as may suffice them to dwell upon. Furthermore, the alternations of winter and summer do evidently avouch how bountifully God hath provided for men's necessities. Whence the prophet wisely gathers, that nothing is more unlikely than that he should neglect to do the part of a father towards his own flock and household.

18 Remember this, the adversary hath railed at the Lord: and a people that is nought worth hath done reproach to thy name.

19 Give not the life of thy turtle-dove to the beast: forget not the congregation of thy poor ones unto the end.

20 Have an eye to thy covenant: for the dark-nesses of the earth are filled with the habitations of cruelty.

21 Let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and the helpless praise thy name.

22 Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember thine own reproach, which is offered unto thee daily by the fool.

23 Forget not the voice of thine adversaries: the noise of them that rise against thee ascendeth continually.

18 *Remember this, &c.*] After he has lifted up the minds of the godly by exalting the power and goodness of God, now he returns to the residue of his prayer; and, first, he finds fault that the enemies rail against God with impunity.

And it is an emphatic manner of speaking when he says *remember this*, even as it is no small offence to offer reproach to God's holy name. On the contrary part, he says that even worthless and insane persons pour out their reproaches so insolently against God. For the word נבל betokens not only a *fool*, but also a *wicked* and *vile* person. Worthily therefore does the prophet term the despisers of God vile or nought worth.

19 *Give not the life, &c.*] The word חַיִּית signifies sometimes *the life*, and so some interpret it a little before in this selfsame verse. But certain it is that here it is taken for a wild beast or for a multitude. Whichever of these ways you think proper to take it, it will be a very apt comparison between the life of a weak and timorous bird, and a strong host of men or a cruel beast. For he likens the church to a turtle-dove, because although there were some number of the faithful, yet were they far too weak for their enemies, or rather, exposed as a prey for them. Afterwards he adds, *forget not the soul, or congregation, of thy poor*. For the word חַיִּית is repeated, and it carries a grace with it, because it is put in diverse senses by reason of the double signification of it. Nevertheless, I thought it best to translate it *congregation* rather than *soul*, because the prophet seems to pray God to keep and defend his own tiny flock against the huge hosts of their enemies. And that he may be the more inclined to mercy, the prophet calls him back to the remembrance of his covenant; even as this was the continual refuge of the saints in their greatest perils, to hope for deliverance because God had covenanted that he would be a father to them. Whence also we gather that our prayers cannot lean securely unto any other support than this, that God hath of free choice adopted us to be his people: whereby it appears also how devilish the phrensy of that filthy cur Servetus was, who hesitates not to term it a fond and foolish delusion to charge God with his promises as we are praying. And once again the faithful admonish us what sore distress pinched them; namely, in that such cruelty and oppression reigned everywhere, as though all places had been the haunts of robbers and dens of thieves. Moreover, he terms them *the darknesses of the earth*, because that at such time as God seemeth to hide his face, the wicked think they may everywhere work what mischief they list, unseen.

21 *Let not the oppressed return, &c.*] This *returning*, as it has relation unto God, imports as much as *to depart empty*. The faithful, therefore, desire that they may not be put to shame by being repulsed at his hand: and they call

themselves *afflicted, poor, and helpless*, that they may make themselves pitied. Notwithstanding, it is to be noted that they neither speak feignedly nor enhance their miseries extravagantly, but were brought low with so many distresses that there remained no help for them in the world. By which example we are admonished that in calling upon God there is speedy remedy for our necessities, even when we are at the lowest possible ebb.

22 *Arise, O God, &c.*] Again the faithful beseech God to get him up into his judgment-seat. For he is then said to arise, when after long forbearing he sheweth in very deed that he forgot not his office. And that he may undertake this cause more willingly, they term him the maintainer of their right; as if they should say, Lord, seeing that thine own cause and thine own concern is in hand here, it is no time to dally. And how this cause should belong to God, they shew therewith, because it is daily subject to the reproaches of fools. Though one may here again translate the word נבול *nought worth*, the heinousness of the mischief is amplified by a circumstance, in that being not content with one reproach, they continue their scoffings without ceasing. Therefore they conclude that God would not forget this frowardness, because they not only have the boldness to rail at his majesty, but also pour out their blasphemies fiercely and boisterously. And although they seem to do it indirectly, yet as they set lightly by God, therefore he says they rise up against God with blind insolence, after the manner of giants, and their loftiness is carried beyond all bounds.

PSALM LXXV.

It is a common rejoicing of the whole church, when it bethinks itself how all the world is governed according to the will of God, and that itself is upheld by his grace and power. Upon which confidence it vaunts itself against the proud despisers of God, whom their own frantic rashness drives headlong into unbridled daring.

[To the chief chanter, "Destroy not," a Psalm of Asaph.
A Song.]

2 We will praise thee, O God; we will praise thee, and thy name is near: they will declare thy wondrous works.

3 When I shall have taken the congregation *unto me*, I will judge according unto right.

4 The earth is loosened, and all the inhabitants thereof; it is I that will establish the pillars thereof. Selah.

5 I said to the fools, Play not the fools : and to the ungodly, Lift not up your horn :

6 Lift not up your horn on high ; *and* speak not with a stiff neck.

7 For advancements neither come from the east, nor from the west, nor from the wilderness.

8 For God is the judge : he bringeth low, and he setteth up.

Destroy not, &c.] Concerning this title, I have spoken as much as was sufficient in Ps. lvii. 1. As for the author, I do not trouble much. Whether it were David, or some other prophet, he at the very commencement bursts out into joy and gratulation. And the repetition carries a force with it to express the fervour of his zeal in setting forth the praises of God. And although the verbs are of the time past in the Hebrew, yet reason requires that they should be turned into the future, which is common enough among the Hebrews. Unless perchance the prophet declare that God had been praised in old time for the benefits that he had bestowed upon his people, thereby to induce him to persevere, that, continuing like himself, he should from time to time minister new matter of praise. The changing of the person in the second part has caused certain interpreters to supply the pronoun relative אשר; as if it had been said, Lord, we will praise thee ; and thy name is near unto them that shew forth thy wondrous works. But I have no doubt that the prophet put the verb *declare* indefinitely, and that he has used the copula instead of the causal particle, as is often wont to be done. The sense therefore will flow very well thus, We will confess to thee, O God : for thy name is near at hand ; and therefore shall thy wondrous works be declared. For no doubt he means that the same persons shall be the publishers of God's wonderful works as he said should set forth his praise. And surely God in manifesting his power openeth his servants' mouths to shew forth his works. In substance, he means that there is just cause to praise God, because he sheweth himself at hand to help his servants. That the *name* of God is taken for his *power* is known well enough ; and his *presence* or *nearness* is judged of by the aid which he giveth his servants in their need.

3 *When I shall have, &c.*] יַעַר signifies *to appoint a place or a day*; and the word מוֹעֵד being derived therefrom, which the prophet uses here, signifies as well *holy assemblies* as *holy days*, and also a *company gathered together in the name of God*. Now then as it is certain that God is brought in here speaking, either of the senses will square well; either that God, taking his people to him, will bring disordered matters into due frame again, or that he will choose him a convenient time to judge. For in leaving his people for a time to the lust of their enemies, he seemeth after a sort to neglect them, in like manner as if a flock should stray, scattered here and there without a shepherd; minding therefore to promise redress of things out of frame, he does well to begin with the gathering together of the church. Notwithstanding, if any prefer to understand it of time, then doth God give warning by this word, that things must be patiently borne with until he shew by the deed itself that the ripe time is come to correct vices, because he only hath the years and days in his power, and best knoweth the juncture and times. And surely I incline this way rather, that God reserveth that to his own judgment which men would fain draw to themselves; namely, the appointment of the end and measure of evils, and the fit season when it shall seem good to him to rise up and deliver them that are his. Nevertheless, the former exposition of the gathering of the church I like well enough also. Neither ought it to seem absurd or uncouth, that God's person is brought in here to return answer to the requests of the godly. For this graphic representation is much more effectual than if the prophet had simply said that God would at length, when he saw time, revenge his church, and bring it together again though it be dispersed and torn. The drift of the words is substantially this, that although God succour not his servants presently, yet he never forgetteth them, but only delayeth the redress which he hath ready at hand until the convenient time. *To judge according to right*, imports as much as to restore troubled and disordered matters to a better state; according as Paul, 2 Thess. i. 6, says, *It is agreeable to the righteousness of God to give relief to those that are afflicted*, and in their turn to punish those that persecute the guiltless. God therefore avoucheth it to pertain to his office to control and adjust the things that are in disorder, in order that this expectation may sustain and comfort us in all our afflictions.

4 *The earth is, &c.*] Many interpreters think that this agrees properly with the person of Christ, at whose coming it behoved the earth, and the inhabitants thereof, to be shaken;

for we know that he reigneth to put away the old man, and to begin his own spiritual kingdom with the destruction of the flesh, but yet in suchwise as that afterwards shall ensue the setting up of the new man. Whereto also they refer the second part of the verse, *I will establish the pillars thereof*; as if Christ should say, As soon as I come into the world, the earth with her inhabitants shall melt and be dissolved, but yet I will presently establish it with steady and solid supports, because the elect, being renewed by my Spirit, shall no more be like grass or withered flowers, but shall be endued with new and unwonted firmness. But I think not that this fine-drawn notion ever came into the prophet's mind; and therefore I interpret it simply, That although the earth be dissolved, yet are the supports thereof in God's hand: for this verse is connected with the last. For it confirms that God will in due time shew himself an indifferent and rightful judge; because it is easy for him to repair all the decays of the world, though the whole frame thereof were fallen to pieces. For though the earth possess the lowest place within the heavenly rim, yet what foundation is it stayed upon, except it is poised in the midst of the air? Again; seeing that so many waters pierce through the veins that run through it, would it not also wash away if it were not stayed by the secret power of God? Howbeit, the prophet, alluding to nature, nevertheless mounts higher; namely, that although the world were in ruins, yet is it God that can set it up again.

5 *I said to the fools, &c.*] After he has set God's office before the eyes of himself and the faithful, now he triumphs over all the ungodly, whose madness and blind rage he arraigns, because, despising God, they vaunt themselves extravagantly. And this holy glorying depends upon the judgment which he denounced in the person of God to be at hand. For as the faithful look for God to be their judge, and are assured that he will come ere it be long, they cease not to glory even in the midst of their oppressions. For although the rage that boils over from the madness of the ungodly pours forth floods to overwhelm them, yet is it enough for them that their life is protected by the hand of God, to whom it is an easy matter to subdue all loftiness, and to bridle all desperate attempts. For the faithful laugh to scorn whatsoever the wicked practise and attempt, and bid them desist from their madness; and in so saying, they give them to understand that they trouble themselves in vain, even as madmen are driven by their own distempered imaginations they know not whither. And it is to be noted that he makes pride to be the cause or mother of boldness;

even as it is most true that men rush on with such reckless fury from no other cause but that being blinded by pride they overrate their power. And because this malady is not easily extirpated from men's hearts, he repeats again *that they should not lift up their horn on high*, and afterwards *that they should not speak stubbornly*; for so means he by *their fat or stiff neck*, because proud persons are wont to puff out their menaces with a stiff neck. Others translate it, *speak not stiffly with your neck*; but the other translation is the truer.

7 *For advancement, &c.*] It furnishes an admirable remedy to correct pride, when the prophet warns men that promotion comes not of the earth, but of God alone. For the thing which for the most part blinds men's eyes is this, that they gaze about on the right hand and on the left, and gather supports from all sides, that relying on them they may fulfil their lusts. Inasmuch, therefore, as they mount not above the world, the prophet avouches that they are much deceived, because that both to lift up and cast down are placed in God's hand only. Truly this seems to be at variance with common experience, because the greater part of the world come to the highest degrees of honour either by their own policy or by the favour and partiality of the people, or by other earthly means. Also, it seems to be a frigid rendering of a cause to say because God is the judge. I answer, that although many climb aloft either by evil arts or worldly help, yet does it not happen by chance; but they are so advanced according to the secret purpose of God, that anon he may scatter them like chaff or stubble. Moreover, the prophet does not simply attribute judgment unto God, but also defines what manner of judgment it is; namely, that casting down one man, and setting up another, he ordereth human affairs as he listeth. And I said that by this means towering spirits may best be brought down, because the licentiousness of worldly persons proceeds from hence, that they shut up God in heaven, and think not that they are bridled with his secret providence. Finally, they deny the sovereignty of God, that they may find free and unimpeded course for their lust. To the intent then that we may learn to settle ourselves soberly and modestly in our proper state, he defines plainly what God's judgment or order of governing the world is; namely, that it is in his power to lift up or cast down whom he listeth among men. Whence it follows, that all such as by spreading abroad the wings of their vanity unadvisedly aspire to any eminence, do, as much as in them is, rob God of his prerogative and power. And this is easily seen, not only by their inebriate

counsels, but also by their blasphemous vauntings, Who shall hinder me? What shall withstand me? as though forsooth it were not an easy matter for God, even with his beck alone, to cast a thousand obstacles suddenly in their way, to quell their fury. But as worldlings endeavour by their rashness and untoward devices to rob God of the honour of being king, even so, as often as we are afraid of their threatenings, our unbelief ungratefully abridges God of his sovereignty. And as often as we are afraid at the noise of every crack, as if we were stricken with a thunderbolt from heaven, such excessive dismay shews plainly enough that we do not yet thoroughly understand what it is for the world to be governed by God. Doubtless we would be ashamed to rob him of the title of judge; yea verily almost all men's minds shrink with horror from so great a blasphemy; and yet when natural understanding has forced us to confess thus much, namely, that God is the judge and sovereign of the world, we imagine I know not what manner of inactive sovereignty, as though he ruled not mankind with his power and providence. But he that holds to this principle, that God determineth upon all men what he himself thinketh good, so as that he himself shapeth every man his fortune, he will not halt in earthly means. Now, the improvement of this doctrine is, that the faithful should submit themselves wholly to God, and not suffer themselves to be carried away by the treacherous wind of presumption. And when they shall see the ungodly wanton, let them not hesitate to despise their foolish and brainless boldness. Moreover, although the chief sovereignty be in God's hand, yet is he termed a judge, that we may know that he overruleth men's affairs with most perfect uprightness. Hence it will come to pass, that every man, abstaining from injury and misdealing, may take refuge in God's judgment-seat when he is wrongfully harmed.

9 For in the Lord's hand there is a cup, and the wine is full of dregs: it is full of mixture, and he shall pour out of the same. Surely they shall wring out the dregs of it: all the wicked of the earth shall drink thereof.

10 But I will declare for ever, and sing unto the God of Jacob.

11 And I will break all the horns of the ungodly: the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

9 *For in the Lord's hand, &c.*] The judgment whereof

he made mention even now, is applied by him more directly to the use of the godly. For he avouches God to reign, to the intent no iniquity should remain unpunished; but that when wicked men have thrown off all restraint he might hale them to the punishment which they have deserved. Whence we gather again what manner of opinion we ought to have of God's providence; namely, such as controls every part of our life by an ever-present power. Therefore he says, there is a cup in God's hand wherewith to make wicked folks drunk. The word *חמר* signifies as well *full of dregs*, as also *red*. But as red wine was the most potent and sharp wine with the Hebrews, the similitude suits well, that there is in God's hand wine of a strong savour, wherewith to make the ungodly drunk unto death; as if he should say, The swiftness of God's vengeance is incredible, even as strong wine penetrating quickly and powerfully to the brain either engenders madness or kindles a fever. Therefore he says that the wine in God's cup looks red, like as in Proverbs, xxiii. 31, it is said, *Look not upon wine when it is red in the glass*. Neither is it any objection that soon after he adds *mixing*; for these two things agree not amiss, that the wicked are soon made drunk with God's vengeance, and that they suck it out to the very dregs even till they perish. For with regard to those that refer the term *mixing* otherwise, that in the hot climates men are wont to dilute their wine with water, there is too much water in their interpretation. Rather, this was added to increase the force, so that the prophet should compare the fury and fervour of God's wrath to spiced wine. Now the prophet intimates by these figures that it is not possible that the ungodly should avoid draining the cup which God presenteth to them, sucking it out to the last drop.

10 *But I will declare, &c.*] This closing of the Psalm shews that the faithful rejoice in their own behalf, for that they had by experience felt God to be their deliverer in adversity. For they seem to denote their own experience in their statement and song. Hereby also they gather further, that by God's help they shall vanquish whatsoever might there is in the reprobates; and that they themselves shall be sufficiently armed, by means of righteousness and equity, to maintain their own welfare. For *the horns of the righteous to be exalted*, imports as much as if they had said that the children of God acquire more security by their faultless and innocent living, than if they endeavoured to rise by all kind of wickedness.

PSALM LXXVI.

God's gracious goodness and truth are here commended, because having promised that he would watch over the city of Jerusalem, he hath defended it against enemies renowned in war, and equipped at all points.

[*To the chief Singer upon Neginoth. A Psalm of Asaph's to be sung.*]

2 God is known in Judah; his name is great in Israel.

3 And his tabernacle was in Salem, and his dwelling-place in Sion.

4 There he brake the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah.

5 More glorious and terrible art thou, than the mountains of prey.

6 The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep; and all the men of strength have not found their hands.

7 At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, the chariot and horses are cast asleep.

To the chief chanter upon Neginoth.] It is likely that this Psalm was made long after the death of David; and therefore many suppose that here is described the story of the deliverance that happened under king Josaphat against the Ammonites. But I am of another opinion: for the Assyrians under the conduct of Sennacherib, not only invaded Judah, but also forcibly assailed the very city which was the capital of the kingdom. And we know how wonderfully the siege was razed, at what time God in one night destroyed the army with a horrible slaughter by the hand of an angel: 2 Kings, xix. 35. Whence not inaptly the prophet says that God brake the arrows, swords, and shields. This however is the point needful above all others to be known, that in this place is commended God's continual regard in defending the church which he hath chosen, that the faithful should not doubt to boast of his protection.

2 *God is known, &c.*] In the beginning of the Psalm the prophet gives us to understand that it came not to pass by man's power or policy that the enemies went away dis-

appointed, but by the never-to-be-forgotten help of God. For whence came the knowing of God and the greatness of his name of which he speaks, but because God stretched out his hand after an unaccustomed manner, so that it was plain to be seen that the people and city were under his governance and protection? The prophet therefore says that God's glory appeared manifestly when the enemies were overthrown by such a miracle. In the verse following he assigns the reason why God, putting the Assyrians to flight, vouchsafed to rescue and defend that city; namely, because he had chosen himself a dwelling-place there, wherein his name should be called upon. The sum is, first, that there is no reason why men should arrogate anything to themselves, in this rescuing of the city which he describes, because God by his mighty acts gained all the glory, and stretched forth his hand from heaven in the sight of all men. And secondly, that God was not moved to set himself against his enemies in any other respect than for his free election's sake. Now as he hath testified by that proof how invincible his strength is in preserving his church, the prophet here exhorts all the faithful to rest fearlessly under his shadow. For if God's glory is precious in his sight, it is no ordinary token of his faithfulness, when we hear that it is his will to have the greatness of his power known, in the preservation of his church. Moreover, considering that the church is the especial stage of God's glory, we must always take diligent heed that our unthankfulness overwhelm not the benefits bestowed upon it, particularly those whose memorial ought to flourish in all ages. Furthermore, although God is not now worshipped in the visible tabernacle, yet as he dwelleth in the midst of us, yea and within us by Christ, doubtless we shall find, as often as need is, that we are secure and safe under his protection. For if the earthly sanctuary brought salvation to Jerusalem, truly he will have no less care at this day, of us whom he hath vouchsafed to choose as his temples, wherein to dwell by the Holy Ghost. Here is used the simple name of the city, which appears to be ancient by Gen. xiv. 18. Some think the name to have assumed a compound form by process of time, as it were *Jebusalem*, because it obtained this name afterwards, in the intervening time, as appears by the book of Judges, xix. 10, because the Jebusites inhabited it. But more correctly may the etymology be taken from the word *רָא*, which signifies *to see*, because Abraham said, *God will look out a sacrifice for himself*, Gen. xxii. 8.

4 *There brake he, &c.*] He defines after what manner God was known; that is, by putting forth a wonderful

proof of his power in preserving the city. And under these figures is described the chasing of the enemies, because they could not otherwise be overthrown than by spoiling them of their armour and weapons. Therefore he says that the arrows, swords, and shields were broken, yea and all their habiliments of war, because the wicked were bereft of all power to do harm. Now then, although they were slain and their weapons remained still whole; yet this transfer of terms is not improper. Some translate the word רשפים, *points* or *heads of weapons*; and properly it were to be translated *fires*; but it is more correct to take it for *arrows*: for now and then birds are metaphorically termed so, by reason of their swiftness: and to arrows is attributed flying, Ps. xci. 6. Furthermore he adds, that *God is more glorious and terrible than the mountains of prey*; by which title he denotes cruel and rapacious kingdoms, according as we know from the beginning, that the more any man was of power to maintain his robbery, so much the more enlarged he his borders. Therefore, as for those great kings that had gotten themselves large dominions by force and wrongful slaughters, he compares them to savage beasts that live by rapine, and their kingdoms to the woody mountains which the beasts haunt that are inured to live by prey. Although therefore the enemies were wont to make violent assault upon Jerusalem, yet does the prophet avouch that God excels far above them all, to the intent the faithful should not shrink for fear.

6 *The stout hearted, &c.*] The power of God in destroying his enemies is enhanced in another form of speech. The word that he uses is derived from שָׁלַל, and the letter א is put instead of the letter ה; for the translation of others, *are made fools*, is constrained. Nevertheless I confess that it imports as much as if he had said they were bereft of counsel and courage: but we must hold us to the propriety of the word. To the same purpose pertains that which is added in the second member, that *the strong men found not their hands*; that is to say, they were no more able to fight than if their hands had been maimed or cut off: the effect is, that their strength whereof they bragged was utterly confounded. To the same effect makes what he says, *they slept their sleep*; that is to say, whereas before they were hardy and stout, now they were as it were benumbed with cowardice. He means therefore that the enemies were bereft of that heroic courage whereof they boasted, and which incited them to such daring: and therefore, neither mind, nor heart, nor the other parts of them could execute their office. By which words he teaches that whatsoever

ability men seem to have is in the hand of God, so that he can at any instant bereave them of the wisdom which he hath given, subdue their hearts, make their hands unfit for war, and bring their whole strength to nought. And as well the courageousness as the puissance of the enemies is magnified, on purpose that the faithful might learn from the contrast to extol the might of God. The same sentence confirms he again, saying *that the chariot and the horse were laid asleep at the rebuking of God*: as if he should say, whatsoever energy was in the enemies, the same was cast down by the beck alone of God. Therefore, though all aids forsake us, let the only favour of God suffice us, seeing that he hath no need of great armies to put back the assaults of the whole world, but is able to shake them off with his blast alone.

8 Thou art terrible, thou, and who is able to stand before thy face, after the time that thou art angry ?

9 Thou hast made thy judgment to be heard out of heaven ; the earth trembled, and was still.

10 When God arose up to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah.

11 Surely the rage of men shall turn to thy praise: the remnant of their rage shalt thou restrain.

12 Vow, and perform unto the Lord your God : let all that be round about him, bring presents unto him that is to be feared.

13 He shall strip off the spirit of the princes: he is terrible to the kings of the earth.

8 *Thou art terrible, thou, &c.*] The repetition of the pronoun *thou* contains in it an exclusive force ; as if he had said, Whatsoever power is in the world, it is easily puffed away, and falls to nothing as soon as God cometh abroad, and therefore he only deserveth to be feared: which the comparison added soon after, confirms. For it gives us to understand that although the wicked are ready to burst with pride, yet are they in nowise able to abide God's look. But as he now and then dissembleth and seemeth to be an idle looker on, the prophet says expressly, that as soon as he beginneth to be angry, all the wicked are like to go to rack. Although then for awhile, they not only stand, but also mount above the clouds with their furiousness, yet the prophet warns us to wait for the time of wrath. Let us also bear this in mind, that this terror is so denounced

against the ungodly as that it sweetly allures the faithful to God.

9 *Thou hast made, &c.*] By the name of heaven he expresses forcibly that God's judgment was more manifest than that it could be ascribed either to fortune or to the policy of men. For sometimes he executeth his judgments darkly, as though they came forth out of the earth; in like manner as, should he raise up a godly and stout prince, the holy and lawful rule that flourishes will be God's judgment, and yet it shall not seem to come with full brightness from the heavens. Therefore, because this kind of help was more than ordinary, it is advanced with a peculiar title of commendation. Hereunto also pertains *the hearing of it*. For it is more for God's judgments to sound out aloud, as it were some thunderclap, and to astound the ears of all men with their noise, than if they should be seen with eyes. And I doubt not but the prophet alluded to that shock which amazes men with fear. For when he says the earth was still, it is properly referred to the ungodly, who being panick-struck, yield the victory to God, and dare not rage any more as they were wont. Inasmuch then as it is only fear that brings them to subjection, he justly states fear to be the cause of their stillness. Not that they restrain themselves willingly, but because God compelleth them whether they will or no. The effect is, that as soon as God thundereth down from heaven, the troubles cease, which the frowardness of the ungodly stirred up when things were confused. At the same time, however, he warns us what men gain by their stubbornness: for all who contemptuously drown the paternal voice of God must needs be quelled by his bolts.

10 *When God arose up, &c.*] Now he shews to what purpose the said judgment tends; namely, that God might set forth a proof of his fatherly love towards all the godly. Therefore he brings in God speaking; not with the mouth, but with the hand, that he may openly shew how great store he setteth by the welfare of the godly. But by the word *rise*, he has an eye to God's delaying, through which the wicked had taken so much liberty to themselves. For he is then said to go up into his judgment-seat, when he sheweth by manifest effect, that he hath a care of the church. For to this end tends the drift of the prophet; that it is no more possible that God should forsake the wretched and innocent; than that he should deny himself. For it is to be noted that God is termed a judge, to rescue the poor that are wrongfully oppressed. For he terms the faithful *the meek of the earth*; who being tamed with afflictions, are not

highminded, but with humble groaning, patiently bear the burden of the cross. For the best fruit of afflictions is to cleanse our minds from haughtiness, and to bend them to meekness and modesty; for thereby we gather certainly, that we are God's retainers, whom he purposes to succour.

11 *Surely the rage, &c.*] Some expound it that the enemies, when they sink under God's hand, will yield him the praise of victory, because they shall be forced to acknowledge themselves to have been vanquished by his mighty hand. Others extract a more subtle sense; that God's glory is the more blazoned when he stirreth up the ungodly, and urgeth forward their furiousness; like as Pharaoh is said to be stirred up to the same purpose, *Exod. xviii. 4*, *Romans ix. 17*. Now although this sense contains a profitable doctrine, yet, as I fear it is too far-fetched, I take it simply, that although at first the rage of the enemies, confounding all things, does as it were overcast them with darkness, yet it shall at length turn to the praise of God, because the issue of things will make it manifest that though they practise what they list yet they can prevail nothing against God. The latter part of the verse also may be taken two ways. For as the word *קָוָה* signifies *to gird up*, some supply the pronoun *the*, in this sense; Although all the enemies of the church are not yet weeded out, yet thou, O God, shalt gird thyself to destroy the residue of them. But more simple is the other interpretation, That although the enemies cease not to breathe cruelty, yet shalt thou impede and restrain them, that they shall not be able to bring their attempts to pass. Perhaps also it would not be inapplicable to say, *Thou shalt gather them, or truss them up in a bundle*. Therefore let us learn, while the wicked throw a cloud over the sovereignty of God, to wait patiently till God glorify himself by a happier change, and with scorn trample their brainless boldness under foot. But if troubles arise from time to time, let us call to mind that it is the proper office of God to tie up the remnant of their outrages, that they may not spread themselves any further. In the meanwhile let us not marvel though new outrages shoot forth from time to time; for even unto the world's end Satan will always have some whom he may goad forward to vex the children of God.

12 *Vow, and perform unto, &c.*] Now he exhorts the faithful to rejoicing. And forasmuch as under the law, in consideration of God's singular benefits, they vowed sacrifices whereby they acknowledged themselves to have received their welfare at God's hand, the prophet calls them forth to this service of devotion; and by the word *perform*, he

denotes steadfastness, that is, that they should not burst out into sudden acknowledgment only, but also testify, in continual succession of time, that the remembrance of the deliverance is thoroughly fixed in their hearts. The chief point indeed is, to think in themselves that God is the author of salvation; and yet is not the solemn profession of godliness superfluous, whereby each man spurs forward, not only himself, but also others to do their duty. In the second member he seems to speak unto the neighbouring nations also; as if he should say that this is such a special kind of grace as is worthy to be praised even by the foreign and uncircumcised nations. Nevertheless, I think it more agreeable to the prophet's mind that either the Levites or all the posterity of Abraham are addressed, both of whom are not improperly said to be *round about God*; because both the tabernacle was pitched in the midst of the camp, as long as the Israelites travelled in the wilderness, and also the resting-place for the ark was chosen to be mount Sion, that they might resort thither from all places round about. And the Levites had given them in charge to keep the temple, and to keep watch and ward round about it. The greater part of interpreters refer the word למורא to God, and so would it be a verbal noun: although the term *fear* is now and then taken passively for God himself. If you refer it to the Gentiles and heathen men, the sense will be, that they shall be tributaries to God; because they shall be so stricken with fear that they shall not dare withstand him any more. But it is more probable that this word is referred unto God, whom the prophet avouches to be more worthy to be feared after the utterance of so noble proof of his might.

13 *He shall strip off, &c.*] Because the word בצר signifies sometimes *to strengthen*, some think it should be translated so in this place. But, as it is but a redoubling of the same sentence, I doubt not but that in the first member the prophet means that intelligence and wisdom are taken away from the princes; and that afterwards God is generally expressed as terrible to them, because he will cast them headlong from their loftiness. But since sound foresight is the beginning of prosperous success, whereof the faithful are often destitute, because they are pampered and perplexed amid their own difficulties, while the ungodly are too sharp-sighted in their wiles, the prophet here avouches that it is in God's hand to bereave them of spirit, and to blind them that seem sharp-witted above others. And because wellnigh the greater number of princes are ill-affected towards God's church, the prophet purposely avouches that

there is terror enough in God to subdue all the kings of the world. Notwithstanding, when he says that their spirit is *stripped off*, or *taken away from them*, it must be restrained to tyrants and robbers, whom God infatuates, because he seeth them apply all their wit and counsels to do mischief.

PSALM LXXVII.

Whosoever was the author of this Psalm, it seems that by his mouth the Holy Ghost hath endited a common form of prayer for the church in affliction, that even in all their cruellest persecutions they might nevertheless send up their prayers unto heaven. For it is not the private grief of some one person, but the groaning and moan of the chosen people that is expressed here. And the faithful commend the deliverance once made, which was a monument of God's everlasting grace, to the end they may encourage themselves and more effectually strengthen themselves in their zeal to pray.

[To the chief chanter upon Jeduthun. A Psalm of Asaph.]

2 My voice *came* unto God, and I cried, my voice unto God, and he hath heard me.

3 I sought the Lord in the day of my trouble: my hand was stretched out in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused comfort.

4 I will think upon God, and shall be disquieted: I will muse with myself, and my spirit shall be oppressed with heaviness. Selah.

5 Thou hast held mine eyes waking: I am weakened and will not speak.

6 I have reckoned up the days of old, the years of ancient time.

7 I will call my song to remembrance in the night: I will commune with mine own heart, and my spirit shall search narrowly.

2 *My voice unto God, &c.*] I think it not a bare complaint, as some interpreters suppose, as though the faithful should wonder that God, who heretofore had been wont to grant their requests, should now become deaf, and be called upon in vain. To me it seems more probable that the prophet either speaks of the present feeling of his mind, or else that he calls to mind how forward and easy he had found

God in hearkening to his prayers. Howbeit, I willingly give my consent that the prophet relates with what great sorrow he was grieved; and, in my judgment, as well by the preter tense as by the future tense of the verbs, he denotes a continued act. And, first, he declares that he did not unadvisedly cry out into the air according as many pour out the excess of their grief at random; but he directed his talk immediately to God, at such time as necessity enforced him to cry out. For the copulative *and*, which is joined to the word cried, must be turned into the adverb of time, *when*, thus: *When I cried*, my voice proceeded unto God. Here-with also he shews that he had not abandoned his perseverance, though he were driven to repeat his crying out oftentimes. That which is added immediately after is a confirmation of faith: for the copulative *and*, as often elsewhere, is put instead of the adverb of cause, *for*; as though he should say, I cry unto God, for he is wont to be merciful and placable to me. In the next verse he expresses more plainly how grievously and hardly the church was oppressed at that time, although there is some ambiguity in the words. *It* sometimes by a metaphor signifies *a wound*; and therefore many interpreters pick out this sense, *My wound ran in the night, and ceased not*; that is to say, the matter was not cleansed away, that it should leave off running. But I rather take the word *hand* in its natural signification, because the word נָגַד, which he uses, signifies not only to run as a sore does, but also to be diffused or extended. Now when he says that he sought God in the day of his trouble, and that his hands were stretched out to him in the night-time, this distribution of his denotes a continuance of time, as if he should say he gave himself wholly to prayer, with unwearied earnestness. The closing of the verse must be read adversatively; that although the prophet's soul found no comfort to assuage his grief, yet does he still stretch out his hands unto God. And even so becomes it us to wrestle with despair, in suchwise as that our sorrow, though it be incurable, foreclose not the gate against our prayers.

4 *I will think upon, &c.*] He expresses in many words the vehemence of his grief, and therewith also the grievousness of his misery. For he makes his moan, that the same thing which was the only remedy to assuage his sorrow, became the cause of his inquietness. It may indeed seem strange that the minds of the godly should be disquieted with thinking upon God. But the prophet means simply, that although he thought upon God, yet was not his sorrow assuaged. Truly, it often happens, that thinking upon God in adversity

increases the grief of the godly; namely, when they conceive that he is angry and displeased with them. But the prophet means not that his heart was stricken with new unquietness as often as he remembered God, but only he bewails that there came no comfort from God to quiet him, which is a most grievous kind of temptation. It is no marvel that the wicked are tormented with horrible unquietness, for as their desire is to depart from God, they suffer just punishment for their traitorousness. But when our thinking upon God, whereby we seek relief of our miseries, quiets not our minds, he seemeth to mock us. Nevertheless this place will teach us, that how full soever we be of fretting, mourning, and disquietness, yet must we proceed in the calling of God even in the midst of these impediments. To the same purpose makes the next verse, where he says he spent whole nights in watching, because God gave him no relief. For as the night was wont to be divided into many watches, by a metaphor he terms his grief, which gave him no respite to sleep, by the name of watches. But whereas a little before he said he prayed to God with a loud voice, and now says he will hold his peace, it seems to be some sort of discrepancy. This question has been answered already in Psalm xxxii. 3, where we have told you that the faithful, being oppressed with sorrow, preserve not an uniform state, but one while burst out into sighs and complaints, and another while are mute, as though their mouths were stopped. Wherefore it is no marvel if the prophet confesses that he was overwhelmed and as it were choked with misery, so that he was not able to speak.

6 *I have reckoned up, &c.*] There is no doubt but he essayed to mitigate his grief with the remembrance of his former joy, but he denies that he felt any ease so suddenly. Still, by the *days of old*, and the *years of ancient time*, he seems not only to note the short course of his life, but also to comprehend many ages. And certainly the faithful must, in affliction, set before their eyes, and call to remembrance, not only the benefits of God, which they themselves have tasted, but also all that he hath bestowed upon his church in all ages. Though it is to be collected from the text, that when the prophet gathered together God's former graces in his mind, he began with his own experience. For I doubt not but that by his *song* he denotes the thanksgiving in which he had exercised himself in his mirth and prosperity. And although there be no fitter remedy to heal our griefs, as I said just now, yet does Satan oftentimes craftily put God's benefits in our heads that the very feeling of the want of them may wound our minds the sorer. Therefore it is likely

that the prophet was pierced with bitter pangs when he compared the joyfulness of the time past with his present miseries. And he makes express mention of the *night*, because it gives birth to more cares and thoughts when we are by ourselves, and withdrawn from the sight of men. Equivalent to this is that which is added immediately after; namely, *to commune with his own heart*. For solitariness does thus much for men, that they call home their thoughts, sift themselves thoroughly, and talk with themselves when there are none to hear them. The latter member of the seventh verse admits a twofold exposition. Because the word חפץ is masculine, and the word רוח is sometimes feminine, some supply the name of God; as if he should say, Lord, there is nothing so hidden in my heart, but thou hast pierced to it. And truly God is properly said to search that man's spirit, whom he awakeneth from his drowsiness, and whom he examineth with exciting torments. For then are all hiding-places and retreats explored, and affections before unknown are brought into the light. Still, as the principles of grammar allow the gender of the noun to be doubtful, others translate it more freely, *my spirit hath searched*; which translation, as it is most received, and flows best, I willingly embrace. Therefore in that debate whereof he has made mention, he searched for what cause he was so sorely afflicted, and also what end his miseries should at length come to. And surely this meditation is profitable, whereunto even God himself moveth us by adversities, for nothing is more perverse than the sluggishness of those that harden themselves under God's scourges. Only we must observe a limit, that sorrow swallow us not up, and then that the bottomless gulf of God's judgments overwhelm us not, if we essay to search them all out. Now the prophet's meaning is, that when he had summoned all his resources from every quarter, there appeared no comfort to assuage his grief.

8 Will the Lord put me back for ever? and will he shew no more favour?

9 Is his mercy clean gone for ever? is his promise consumed from generation to generation?

10 Hath God forgotten to be pitiful? or hath he shut up his mercies in displeasure? Selah.

11 And I said, my death, the years of the right hand of the Most High.

8 *Will the Lord, &c.*] Doubtless this was a part of the searchings which he revolved in his spirit. By the way he

means that he was almost at the last cast, through daily succession of miseries. For he broke not forth into these words but after such long endurance that he durst scarce hope that God would ever shew him favour. And with good reason did the prophet debate with himself whether God would not continue to be favourable to him. For God embraceth us with his goodwill, on condition that he will continue the same to the end. And he does not exactly find fault with God, but rather, in debating with himself, he gathers from the nature of God, that it cannot be but he must continue his free favour towards the godly, to whom he has once shewn himself a father. Now even as from the free goodwill of God, as from a fountain, he has deduced whatsoever benefits the faithful receive at his hand, so a little after he adjoins his goodness; as if he should say, How should God break off the course of his fatherly love, since he cannot put off his own nature? We see then how he repels the assaults of temptations, by opposing to them God's goodness. By demanding whether *his word or promise be spent*, he means that he is destitute of all comfort, because he meets with no promise to uphold his faith. And it is a bottomless pit of despair, when God taketh away his promises, wherein our welfare is wrapped up. If any one object that he could not be destitute of the word, who had the law to lay his hands on, I answer, that in consideration of the infirmity of the time, special promises were then needful. Therefore in Psalm lxxiv. 9. the faithful have complained that they see not the wonted signs any more, and that there was no prophet any more that might determine things among them. If David were the author of this Psalm, we know he was wont to ask counsel of God in matters of doubt and perplexity, and also that answer was given him. Now if this relief were taken from him in his misery, he has good right to complain that he can meet with no word to uphold his faith. But if some other were the author of it, this complaint is applicable to the intermediate time between the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity and the coming of Christ, because at that time the course of prophecy was after a sort broken off, and there was none endued with the peculiar gift of the Spirit, that might raise up the hearts of them that were fallen, or hold them from falling. Besides this, it happens sometimes, that although God's word is offered us, yet does it not enter into us, because we are so distressed with anguish, that we admit no drop of comfort. But I embrace the former sense; that is, that the church, as yet hanging in uncertainty upon the beholding of shadows alone, had need of daily props, being destitute of special prophecies. Although from hence

is gathered a profitable doctrine, that we must not be disquieted out of measure, if God at any time withdraw his word from us, according as he exerciseth his servants by wonderful means, so that they imagine that the whole scripture refers to something else; and although they long to hear God speak, yet can they not be persuaded to apply his words to their own behoof. This, as I said, is a sorrowful and painful thing, but yet it must not shut up the passage of our prayers.

10 *Hath God forgotten, &c.*] The prophet proceeds still in that said debating, the end whereof notwithstanding is not to weaken his faith, but rather to cheer it. For he demands not as of a thing doubtful, but it is as if he should say, Hath God forgotten himself, or hath he changed his nature? For he cannot be God, unless he be merciful. I confess indeed he stood not unshaken, as though he had had a heart of steel. But the more severely that he was assailed, the more did he lean on this doctrine, that God's goodness is so joined with his being, that it is impossible for him to be merciless. Therefore, as often as doubts creep upon us in our cares and griefs, let us always learn to aim at this mark, whether God have changed his nature that he should not be merciful. To the same effect tends the latter member, *Hath he shut up, or withdrawn his mercies in displeasure?* For it was an ordinary commendation among the saints, to say that God is long-suffering, slow to wrath, ready to forgive, and easy to be entreated. Whereupon Habakkuk grounded that saying of his in his Song, i. 2, *Even in his anger will he be mindful of his mercy.* The prophet then gathers here that the chastisement which he feels, prevents not but that God, being soon reconciled, may turn himself again to his accustomed manner of benefiting, because his anger towards his children lasteth but a moment. Nay rather, in shewing signs of his wrath, he loveth most tenderly them whom he chastiseth. Indeed his wrath abideth always upon the reprobates. But the prophet, numbering himself among his children, and speaking of the rest of the faithful, does worthily conclude, from the impossibility of the thing, that God's displeasure for a time cutteth not short the course of his mercy.

11 *And I said, &c.*] This place is translated sundry ways. Some derive the word חלתי from חלה, which signifies *to flee*, and they elicit this sense; that the prophet, being overwhelmed with a heap of miseries, can think no otherwise but that God hath appointed him to utter destruction, as though it were a confession of despair. Others translate it *to be sick*, or *to be weakened*, which suits the

context far better. But yet are they not agreed about the sense. For according to some interpreters the prophet accuses and blames himself for being so weak and faint, and that he set not himself to resist them more manfully. And this is a tolerable interpretation, because the saints are wont to gather heart after their waverings. Nevertheless, I rather embrace the other interpretation, that the prophet should say that this was a malady that lasted but awhile, and so should compare it indirectly to death, like as it is said in Ps. cxviii. 18, *In chastising, the Lord chastised me, but yet he delivered me not to death.* Also, *I shall not die, but live.* I doubt not then that the prophet unburdens himself, assuring himself that he is cast down but for awhile, and therefore that the grief is to be borne patiently, because it is not deadly. Likewise the interpreters disagree in the second member also. For they that connect this verse with the verses going before, think that the prophet was so heart-broken at first that he thought himself past recovery, and that afterwards he lifted up his head in turn, like as they that be cast over shipboard often rise above the water. Moreover, they will have it to be spoken in the way of encouragement, that the prophet should call to remembrance the years in which he had found God merciful to him. But more correctly may we understand it thus; There is no cause why thou shouldst discourage thyself unto death, inasmuch as thou art sick of a curable disease; for so is God's hand wont to make whole such as it hath stricken. Yet do I not reject the opinion of them that translate שנות *alterations* or *changes*: for as שנה signifies *to change*, or *to do a thing divers times*, the Hebrews term *years* שנות, from *returning*, because they revolve perpetually. Nevertheless, whichever way you please to take it, the comfort whereof I have spoken will remain still; namely, that the prophet, assuring himself of another change, yields not himself over unto death. They that approach it the other way, interpret it somewhat otherwise; as if the prophet should say, *Why shouldst thou not bear with God's severity at this time, seeing that his bounteousness hath cherished thee heretofore?* Like as Job said, ii. 10, *Seeing we have received good at God's hand, why shall we not bear evil also?* But it is more likely that the prophet has an eye to the future, as if he should say he ought to await the years or revolutions of the right hand of the Most High, until he shine upon him with his favour again.

12 I will remember the works of God: truly I

will remember thy wonderful works from the beginning.

13 And I will be mindful of all thy works, and I will muse upon all thy doings.

14 Thy ways, O God, are in thy sanctuary : who is so great a God as *our* God ?

15 Thou art the God that workest wonders : thou hast made thy strength known among nations.

12 *I will remember, &c.*] Now the prophet rises up more courageously against the temptations which had almost prevailed to the overwhelming of his faith. For this remembering of God's works differs from the remembering that he mentioned before. For then he did but look from a distance at the benefits of God, which were not yet able to assuage or abate his grief. But here he takes them as assured testimonies of his everlasting grace ; and therefore, to give it more of earnestness, he repeats the sentence, adding an affirmation also. For the word '2, which is put in this place, does but confirm or enhance. Therefore, as one who has gotten the upperhand, he triumphs in the remembrance of God's works, because he is certainly persuaded that God will be none other than he hath shewn himself to be from the beginning. And in the second member he highly extols the power of God which he had shewn in preserving his servants. Indeed he writes it, *thy secret*, or *thy wonderful work* ; but I have not hesitated to correct the obscurity by altering the number, as also soon after he will in the same singular number denote many miracles. The effect is, that God's wonderful working, which he hath always used in maintaining the welfare of his servants, if we weigh it accordingly, is enough to vanquish all sorrows. And hereby we may learn, that though sometimes the remembrance of God's works brings us not comfort enough, yet must we strive that we faint not for weariness : which is to be marked advisedly. In time of heaviness we wish always to find what may assuage the bitterness of our grief ; but the only way to do that is to cast our care upon God. But it often happens that the nearer God approacheth to us, the more, to our seeming, he increaseth our grief. Many, therefore, when they profit nought that way, think nothing better for them than to forget God. And so they loathe his word, and by hearing thereof their sorrow is rather sharpened than abated, nay rather, they would with all their heart that God were far off, who in suchwise teareth open and inflameth their grief. Others, to bury the re-

membrance of him, busy themselves altogether about worldly matters. But the prophet deals far otherwise; who, though he obtained not forthwith such success as he wished, yet ceased he not to set God before his eyes, wisely upholding his faith with this thought, that as God altereth not his mind and disposition, it is not possible but he must at length shew himself merciful to his servants. Also let us learn to open our eyes to behold God's works, the excellence whereof becomes vile in our eyes by reason of our dulness, but will ravish with admiration those who fix their thoughts upon it. The same thing repeats he in the twelfth verse, namely, that he will never leave musing thereupon till he receive the ripe fruit thereof in due time. For that so many examples of God's grace profit us not at all, nor edify our faith, comes of this, that as soon as we have begun to take a taste of them, our own fickleness draws us to something else, and we fall away at the very beginning.

14 *Thy ways, O God, &c.*] Because it seems to some a frigid and jejune expression, to say that *God's ways are in his sanctuary*, some are forced to translate it *in holiness*; but, as the order of grammar will scarcely admit that, we must see if there be not a profitable lesson to be drawn from the natural signification of the word *שְׁכֵנֶת*, or *sanctuary*. Some will have it to be an abrupt exclamation, as if he should say, *O God, that art in the sanctuary, O thy ways*; but I like it not, because they also wrest the prophet's words violently. This member, therefore, must be read together in one strain, and the name *sanctuary* must be taken either for heaven or the temple. But I had rather refer it to heaven, that the meaning may be that God's ways are far higher than the world, so that we must mount above all the heavens if we mind to know them aright. For although God's works are in some part manifest to us, yet does this knowledge come far short of the immeasurable height of them: added to which, there are none that enjoy the least taste of them, save they that rise up into heaven by faith. And yet the uttermost point that they can reach is always this, reverently to look up with admiration to God's hidden wisdom and power, which, though they shine forth in his works, nevertheless far exceed the capacity of our understanding. If any one except that it is improper to enclose in heaven the ways of God, which are spread abroad through the whole world, the solution is easy: for, although there is no corner of the earth wherein God sheweth not some proof of his might, yet the wonderful wisdom of his works escapes the eyes of men. If any man had rather understand it of the temple, we have had almost the like

sentence in Psalm lxxiii. 16, and 17: *It is but foolishness and weariness of spirit, until I enter into the sanctuary of God.* And truly the temple, wherein God revealed himself, was as it were an earthly heaven. Thus understand we the prophet's mind to be, that because he had poured out troublesome complaints at the beginning, now with a peaceable mind he commends and honours the lofty ways of God, and acknowledging his own weakness, keeps himself quietly and soberly within his own limits, and allows not himself to deem of God's secret judgments according to the understanding of the flesh. And therefore he cries out straightway, *Who is so great a God as our God?* By which comparison he insinuates not that there are many gods; but he indirectly rebukes the madness of the world, in that being not content with the one God, whose glory is apparent, they forge themselves many gods. For if men would look upon God's works with pure eyes, they would readily repose themselves on him alone.

15 *Thou art the God, &c.*] He confirms the same sentence, proving God's greatness by the wonderfulness of his works; as if he should say he spake not of God's secret essence, which fills both heaven and earth, but of the proofs of his power, wisdom, goodness, and righteousness, which are openly seen, although they exceed the measure of our understanding. Word for word it is, *that workest a wonder*; but it is a change of the number, as I said just now. And hereby we gather, that God's glory is nearer us, and more evidently seen of us, than that there can be any just excuse of ignorance. For God worketh wonderfully, so that not even the blindness of the heathen nations can excuse them. And therefore there is added, *Thou hast made thy strength known among the nations*; which saying, although it pertains to the deliverance of the church, yet shews that God's glory cannot be despised without heinous impiety, seeing he hath avouched it so manifestly and so mightily among the heathen.

16 Thou hast rescued thy people with *thine own* arm, *even* the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.

17 The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee: they were afraid; yea even the deeps trembled.

18 The clouds made the waters to flow; the heavens yielded a noise: yea and thine arrows run about.

19 The voice of thy thunder was in the air: the

lightnings shone upon the world: the earth trembled and shook.

20 Thy ways were in the sea, and thy paths in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.

21 Thou leddest thy people as sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

16 *Thou hast rescued, &c.*] Above all the other miracles of God, he celebrates the deliverance of the people, unto which the Holy Ghost everywhere calleth back the godly, that they may cherish the hope of their welfare therewith. And it appears well enough that God's power was at that time revealed to the Gentiles. For although it came to pass, through Satan's artifice, that the truth of history was corrupted with many fables, yet is that to be imputed to the maliciousness of those who, being eye-witnesses, preferred wilfully to overcast themselves with darkness. For whence came it to pass that they feigned Moses to be I know not what wizard, and forged those so many monstrous lies which Josephus has gathered together against Apion, but because they were purposely bent to suppress the mighty power of God? Nevertheless, the prophet's purpose in this place is not so much to condemn the Gentiles of ingratitude, as to minister matter of good hope to himself and to all other the children of God, because at that time God uttered a proof of his love towards his chosen, for all people, in all ages, to look upon. *His arm* is taken here for his notable and renowned power. For God delivered not his people secretly, or after an ordinary manner, but as it were with arm stretched out. In calling them Jacob and Joseph's children, he assigns the cause why God accounted them for his people, that is, in respect of the covenant that he had made with their holy fathers. And although the two tribes which descended from the two sons of Joseph had their first original from Jacob, as well as the rest, yet is the name of Joseph expressed for honour's sake, by whose working and benefit all the seed of Abraham were preserved in safety.

17 *The waters saw thee, &c.*] He touches briefly upon certain of the miracles in which God had shewn forth his arm. And in a figurative speech he says that *the waters saw God*, verily because being moved as it were with a secret instinct, they obeyed his commandment in giving passage to his chosen people. For neither had the sea nor Jordan altered their nature by giving place of their own accord, unless the feeling of God's power had touched them both. Not that they altered their course backward by dis-

cretion or understanding; but because in that retiring, God shewed that even the very inanimate elements were ready to yield obedience to him. And herein lies an indirect antithesis to arouse the dulness of such as acknowledge not God's presence in delivering his people, which was visible even to the very waters. That which is added concerning the depths, imports as much as if it had been said that not only the upper face of the waters was stricken at the sight of God, but also that his power pierced even to the deepest gulfs thereof.

18 *The clouds made, &c.*] Because the noun נִיִּים cannot be taken in construction, I doubt not but the verb is put transitively, although it imports little to the effect of the matter. For the prophet means, without any ambiguity, that not only the very sea and the river Jordan, but also the waters that hung in the clouds, yielded due honour to God, because the air being shaken with thunder poured down great showers. And his purpose is to shew, that which way soever men turn their eyes, the brightness of God's glory appears in the deliverance of his people, even everywhere upward and downward, from the heavens to the bottom of the seas. Moreover, it is not quite certain what history he denotes, unless perchance it be that which is reported in Exodus ix. 23; namely, *when hail mixed with thunder and lightning brought a horrible plague upon Egypt*: for there is no doubt but that by the *walking arrows* he denotes lightnings. Connected with this is the next verse, where he says that *the voice of thunder was heard in the air, and lightning shone upon the world, so sore that it even shook it*. It comes to this, that in the passing of the people out of Egypt, God's power was superabundantly manifested in the sight and hearing of all men, at what time both the heaven thundered on all sides, and all the air glittered with lightning, and the earth itself was shaken.

20 *Thy ways, &c.*] He describes again in other words the miracle that was wrought in drying up the Red sea. For what agrees properly with the Israelites he applies to God, under whose assurance and leading they passed dryshod through the midst of the Red sea. And he declares that their passage was made after an unaccustomed manner: for neither was the sea drained by man's art, neither was the course of it turned another way, but the people went on foot through the midst of the waters, in which immediately after Pharaoh and his host were drowned. In consideration whereof he says that *the footsteps of God were not known*, because as soon as the people were conveyed over, he restored the waters to their accustomed course again. The end to

which it was done, is added; namely, the deliverance of the church, which unto all the godly ought to be a sufficient warrant to hope for help and deliverance. In comparing the people to sheep, he intimates that there was no wisdom, policy, nor strength in them, saving that God vouchsafed to discharge the office of a shepherd in leading his flock, which was needy and destitute of all things, through the sea and the wilderness, and through all other hindrances into the heritage which he had promised them. This confirms he by the persons of Moses and Aaron: for although their service was notable and worthy to be had in remembrance, yet God did not a little illustrate his mighty power by this circumstance, that he matched two obscure and despised persons against the furious rage and huge hosts of a most proud king. For what could the rod of an outlaw and fugitive, and the voice of a poor bondman have done against a terrible tyrant and a warlike nation? So much the more then appeared God's power, when it wrought in those vessels of earth and clay. Nevertheless, I gainsay not but that he therewith commends the ministers to whom God enjoined so honourable a charge.

PSALM LXXVIII.

That he may comprehend many things in small limits, it is to be noted that there are two chief heads of this Psalm. For on the one hand the prophet declares in what sort God adopted himself a church out of the seed of Abraham, how lovingly and gently he cherished it, how wonderfully he gathered it out of Egypt, and what sundry benefits he bestowed upon it. And on the other hand he upbraids the Jews with their froward and wicked revolting from time to time from so bountiful a father, who had made them so much beholden unto him, that his inestimable goodness appeared, not only in the very wellspring of his free adoption, but also in that he continued incessantly to strive against the stubbornness of so falsehearted and untamable a people. And he makes mention of the renewing of God's grace, and as it were of a second election of his, at what time he chose David out of the tribe of Judah to rule over the kingdom.

[*An Instruction of Asaph.*]

1 Hear my law, O my people: incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

2 I will open my mouth into a parable; I will utter riddles from of old time;

3 Which we have heard and known, and which our fathers have declared unto us.

4 We will not hide them from their children in the generation to come, shewing forth the praises of the Lord, and his mighty power, and his wondrous work which he hath done.

5 He established a covenant in Jacob, and set a law in Israel, for he hath commanded our fathers, that they should make the same known to their children ;

6 That their posterity may know it, and that the children which shall be born of them may rise up and shew it unto their children.

1 *Hear my law, &c.*] In my judgment a probable conjecture may be formed from the end of this Psalm, that it was written long after the death of David, for in it is commended the kingdom that was set up by God's appointment in David's house. Again; by way of contrast there is matched against it the tribe of Ephraim, which is said to have been rejected. Whereby it appears that the ten tribes were at that time withdrawn from the rest of the body. For it is not for nought that the kingdom of Ephraim is branded with dishonour, as spurious. Nevertheless, whosoever is the author of the Psalm, he does not introduce God speaking, as some think, but he speaks himself to the Jews in the character of a teacher. And it is no objection that he terms them his people, like as he also terms the law his law; for it is no new thing among the prophets to borrow the name of him that sent them, that their doctrine may be of the more authority. And indeed not inappropriately is the truth, wherewith they are intrusted, said to be theirs. So Paul, Rom. ii. 16, glories in his own gospel, not that he had devised it, but because he was a preacher, and a witness of it. However, I know not whether the interpreters have done right in translating the word *תורה* *law*; for it seems to be something more general, according as it appears in the other member, where he puts *the words of his mouth* in the same sense. Now then, if we consider how slow they are to hear God, who even profess themselves most to be his disciples, we shall confess that it was not for nought that the prophet made this preface. For he speaks indeed to the unteachable and stubborn, who wilfully refuse to submit themselves to God's word. But as there is commonly too much slowness even in the faithful themselves, it

was not superfluous to make this exhortation to the slothful. And to procure greater attention, he declares that he will treat of great and high matters. For the word מִשְׁל, which I have translated *parables*, denoted *grave and notable sentences*, such as adages or proverbs, and apophthegms. Therefore as the matter itself, if it be grave and weighty, awakens men's thoughts, the author of the Psalm avouches that he purposes to utter nothing but wise sayings. The word חִידוֹת, which, following others, I have translated *riddles*, is put not so much for dark speeches, as for sentences that are shrewd and worthy to be marked. For the prophet means not to wrap up his song in doubtful terms, but luminously and plainly to treat, as well of God's benefits, as of the people's unthankfulness. Only, as I say, his purpose is to sharpen his readers, that they may weigh this sermon with the more heed. And this place is cited by Matthew, xxiii. 35, and applied to the person of Christ, when he holds the people's minds in suspense with dark parables; for in so doing he meant to prove himself an especial prophet of God, that he might be received with the greater reverence. Forasmuch then as he was like a prophet in this respect, that he preached of sublime mysteries in a lofty strain, that is appositely transferred to his person, which the prophet avouches of himself. Now then, if in this Psalm there shines forth such majesty, as in its own right ought to stir up and inflame the readers with desire to learn, we gather hereby with what earnest heed it becomes us to receive the Gospel, wherein Christ openeth to us the treasures of his heavenly wisdom.

3 Which we have heard, &c.] Whereas, having premised that he would treat of great and mystical matters, he adds now that it is a common doctrine, and handed down traditionally, there seems to be some variance; for if it behoved the fathers to tell their children the things that are spoken here, then ought it to be a doctrine familiarly known to the whole people, yea and even to the most ignorant and uninstructed. Where then are the riddles that he spoke of just now? I answer that these things are easy to be reconciled. For although the Psalm contains many things commonly known, yet does he deck them out in all the pomp of language that he may the more effectually move men's hearts, and win himself the more authority. By the way, it is to be noted that however high may be the majesty of God's word, yet is that no hindrance but that the profit thereof may extend even to the unlearned and little ones, according as the Holy Ghost, not without cause, allureth them to the learning thereof, which is to be marked advisedly. For if God,

accommodating himself to the capacity of man, speaks in a less elevated strain, the lowly manner of his teaching is had in disdain: but if he mounts up at all, to make his word the more revered, its obscurity is made an excuse for neglect of it. Now as the world is infected with these two vices, the Holy Ghost so tempereth his style, as that the loftiness of his doctrine cannot be hidden even from the meanest, if they bring with them a calm and docile spirit, and an earnest desire to profit. Also it is the prophet's purpose to relieve his sayings of all doubts, as he intends to bring forth no new thing, but things long ago well known and received in the church without gainsaying. And therefore he not only makes mention of hearsay, but also adds *knowledge*. For many things are rashly bruited abroad, which notwithstanding are not of substantial credit; nay rather, nothing is more common than for men's ears to be filled with fables. Not without cause then does the prophet seal up the things which he said he had heard of with testimony of their certainty. - He adds that the Jews had been so taught by their fathers; not that always that is void of fault which is home-bred, but because there is more scope for forgery when things are brought from a distant country. But chiefly it is to be noted that not all manner of fathers are betokened here, but such fathers as were chosen to be God's peculiar people, and with whom the heavenly doctrine was deposited.

4 *We will not hide, &c.*] Some take the word נִכְחַד in niph'al, and translate it, *they are not hidden or concealed, &c.* But as the principles of grammar require to have it otherwise, translate it thus; *that we should not conceal from our posterity* the things which we receive from our ancestors, but should endeavour to hand them down to our children's children. And by this means is all pretence of ignorance taken away, because it was God's will that these things should be published through endless succession of ages, so that being handed down in each separate family, it might come even to the last. Also here is shewn to what end; namely, that *they might advance God's praises and his might in the wonders that he had wrought*. Nevertheless, as the consent of men were not enough to give full credit to the doctrine, the prophet proceeds yet further, and makes God the author of it. Therefore he declares that the fathers trained up their children in this doctrine, not of their own mind, but by the commandment of God. Some refer the words *statute and law* to the present purpose, because God had put his decree in Jacob, as an inviolable rule, that the deliverance of the people might be in every man's mouth for evermore; but it seems too straitened a sense.

Therefore I extend it to the written law, which notwithstanding was in part given to this end, that the remembrance of their deliverance might keep the people in obedience to God after they were once gathered together. The prophet therefore means, not only that God purchased the Jews to himself with a mighty hand, but also that he sealed up his grace, that the knowledge thereof should never be obliterated. And certainly it was then as it were registered in public records, when the covenant was established by the written law, that the offspring of Abraham might know themselves to have been separated from all other nations. For it had been a matter but of light importance to have known the bare story only, if they had not had respect to their adoption, and to the fruit of the same. The decree therefore is this; that the fathers, being instructed in the doctrine of the law themselves, should, as it were out of the mouth of God, make report to their children, that they were not only once delivered, but also gathered into one body of the church, that they might in holiness and purity worship God their deliverer through all ages. I doubt not but that the article **וְאֵל** is put here in the way of exposition for *namely*, or *that is*. I have translated it by the word *for*, which has the same force. In the next verse he confirms that which he said concerning the continual succession of the doctrine. For much it behoves us to know that the law was not given for one age only, but that the fathers should hand it down to their children as it were by inheritance, so that it might never drop through, but continue in force to the world's end. This is the reason why Paul says, 1 Tim. iii. 15, that *the church is the pillar and foundation of the truth*. Not that the truth is weak of itself, and has need of others' help, but because God spreadeth it abroad by his ministers, who, when they faithfully execute their office of teaching, do after a sort hold up the truth with their shoulders. And the prophet intimates that we should take care that there may be a continual succession of persons to execute the office of teaching. Therefore, as before the law was yet written it is said of Abraham, Gen. xviii. 19, *he will bring up his children in the ways, and commandments, and ordinances of the Lord*, so after his death the patriarchs were enjoined of necessity to do the same. When the law was instituted, God appointed priests over his church to be public masters and teachers: that the same is to be observed under the reign of Christ, he hath testified by Isaiah, lix. 21, saying, *I will put my mind in the mouth of thy seed, and of the seed that shall spring from them for evermore*. Here, however, is given by the way a peculiar

commandment to fathers, that each of them should diligently instruct their households; and all are warned in general, that it is a most acceptable labour to godward when they endeavour to hand down his name to posterity. For they are not a few whom the prophet denotes by these words, *that the children which shall be born of them may rise up*; but as many as are born, so many will he have to grow up as preachers, by whose efforts pure religion may evermore flourish and thrive.

7 That they may put their trust in God, and not forget the works of God; and that they may keep his commandments:

8 And that they be not as their fathers, a back-sliding and provoking generation; a generation that hath not set their heart aright, and whose spirit was not faithful to godward.

9 The children of Ephraim, being armed, and shooting in bows, turned back in the day of battle.

10 They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law;

11 And they forgot his works, and the wonderful things that he had shewed them.

7 *That they may put, &c.*] He points out the use of the doctrine; first, that through so precious fruit of their labour, the fathers should be the more cheered to teach their children, when they see themselves both to maintain the pure worship of God, and also to provide for the salvation of their children; and, secondly, that on the other hand their children, being inflamed with greater zeal, should be eager to learn, and not rove in fond speculations, but aim at the right mark. For it is a sad and wretched weariness, to be *always learning and never to come at the knowledge of the truth*: 2 Tim. iii. 7. Therefore, when we hear to what end the law was given, it is easy to gather thereby which is the true and available method of profiting aright. Therefore he sets *trust* in the first place. Afterwards he requires the keeping of the commandments; and, in the middle, he has placed the remembrance of God's works, which avails to the strengthening of faith: as if he should say, The sum of heavenly wisdom is this; that men, fixing their thoughts on God, should with faith unfeigned call upon him; and, for the purpose of feeding their faith, exercise themselves in thinking upon his benefits, and consequently yield themselves un-

feignedly obedient to him. But hereby we may learn that the true service and worship of God begins with faith: for God is defrauded of the chief part of his honour if we transfer our trust to any other thing.

8 *And that they be not, &c.*] By this circumstance he gives them better to understand how needful a sermon this is: verily, because the Jews are prone to falling away, if they be not held by powerful restraints. For he takes it as a thing that cannot be denied, that they are not a whit better disposed than their fathers, whom he avouches to have been falsehearted, rebellious, crooked, and disobedient. By and by, therefore, would they be sliding away if their hearts were not strengthened with continual stays. Nay rather, that which Horace writes of his own countrymen, experience shews to be true everywhere: The time of our fathers worse than our grandfathers has bred us who are more wicked than themselves, and we anon shall leave a still more sinful offspring behind us. What then would be the consequence, if God did not succour the world, of this falling from bad to worse? Now as the prophet proves, by the malice and wickedness of their fathers, that the Jews had need of strait discipline to call them back from their evil examples, hereby we gather how foolishly the world persuades itself that to follow the footsteps of their fathers is as good as the law. Neither does the prophet treat of all manner of people, but of the holy and chosen offspring of Abraham; neither finds he fault with a few of them, but almost the whole nation, among whom there reigned everywhere as well stubbornness as forgetfulness of God's grace, and falsehearted dissimulation. Neither mentions he the fathers of some one age, but he comprises a long period of years past, lest they might defend themselves by the continuance of sinning. Wherefore we must advisedly make choice among the fathers, which of them it is expedient for us to follow. And forasmuch as that untoward following of the fathers is hard to be eradicated, because there is bred in us a certain reverence for them by nature, the prophet enhances their wickedness with many words, upbraiding them with their backsliding, their provoking, their falseheartedness, and their hypocrisy; which, though they are most grievous reproaches, yet will it appear anon by the context that they were not greater than they had deserved. Some translate חֲכִי *to establish*; but in my judgment the prophet means rather that they always turned aside from God into crooked by-paths. Also in the strain following, some, instead of *not being faithful unto God*, translate נִאֻמָּה, *that they leaned not unto God*. But the former

interpretation is more correct; namely, that they were not steadfastly and earnestly devoted to God, albeit that they were sworn unto him. Now whereas the papists gather by this passage that it is in man's power to bow his own heart which way he will, and to direct it either way, it is a frivolous sort of reasoning. For although the prophet justly blames those that have not set their heart aright, yet his purpose is not to discuss what they are able to do of themselves. For although it belongs only to God to turn men's hearts to him by the inward moving of his Spirit, yet shall they not be exempted from blame, nor escape punishment, whom their own lust or lewdness draws away from him. But, by the vices that are reprov'd here, it is to be learned in what wise God will be worshipp'd of us. For, first, we must lay aside stubbornness, and take his yoke upon us; secondly, we must clothe ourselves in the spirit of meekness: the affections of our heart must be brought in obedience to God, and uprightness must be followed, and that not with an evanescent impulse, but with hearty steadfastness.

9 *The children of Ephraim, &c.*] He propounds an example of the said unfaithfulness in the children of Ephraim. And as it is not easy for those to amend by doctrine alone who are wilfully bent on evil, he proves by the punishments sent by God that the children of Ephraim were reprobates. For seeing they were a warlike people, it was a token of God's wrath for them to turn their backs in battle. And he declares expressly that they were skilful archers, because it is more shame for such to flee for fear as are armed with weapons to strike their enemies afar off. Whereby also it appears more evidently that God was angry with them, in that he not only left them destitute of his help, but also made their hearts faint. It is demanded wherefore he finds fault only with the children of Ephraim, seeing that just now he comprehended all the tribes in general? Some interpreters refer it to the slaughter that was made among them by the men of Gath, when they came forth against the Ephraimites to recover the booty; 1 Chron. vii. 21, and 22. Which exposition is too restrained: for it may be that the kingdom of Israel was decayed, and in a manner brought to ruin at the time that this Psalm was made. Others therefore think, not amiss, that here is a figure synecdoche, and so take the children of Ephraim for the whole people: saving that they unadvisedly pass over how the Ephraimites are named on purpose, because they were the first authors of rebellion to others, at what time Jeroboam set up the calves. For it is requisite that we bear in mind that which we have

said already; namely, that it is not for nought that about the end of the Psalm the refusal of the tribe of Ephraim is compared with the election of the tribe of Judah. And therefore even here also he speaks of the children of Ephraim in the way of comparison, to give warning to the true children of Abraham by the example of those that had renounced the church, and yet boasted in the empty title of the church. For as they excelled in multitude and wealth, their influence was too powerful in beguiling the simple, whereof the prophet now bereaves them, avouching them to be utterly void of God's assistance. For to this effect tends the rendering of the cause; *for that they kept not the covenant of the Lord*. Indeed others were faulty in that behalf as well as they; but yet he declared the example of God's vengeance in that tribe advisedly, because it had by the authority thereof corrupted wellnigh the whole realm. Therefore, as the glory and dignity of Ephraim was as it were a standard of shameful backsliding to all the rest, the prophet purposed to give a caution, lest the same visor might continue still to deceive the simple. Moreover, he blames them not lightly, but upbraids them with their traitorousness in their contempt of the whole law, and breach of the covenant. For although he takes both the words *law* and *covenant* in one sense, yet, in putting *the covenant* foremost, he shews sufficiently that he treats not only of the rule of right living, but of the whole service of God, of the faithfulness of his promises, of invocation, and of the doctrine of godliness, the foundation whereof was the adoption. Therefore he calls them covenant-breakers, because they were fallen from their trust in the promises, whereby God had covenanted to be their father. Nevertheless, afterwards he fitly adds *the law*, wherein the covenant was sealed up as it were in public records. The word *refuse* augments the heinousness of the crime, as by which he intimates not only that they were rashly carried away with a certain headiness, so that they sinned through lightness, lack of skill, and oversight, but also that they had broken God's holy covenant of set purpose and deliberate wilfulness. Also he points out the fountain of so great ungodliness to have been unthankfulness, in that they maliciously buried and esteemed as nought the deliverance which was worthy of everlasting remembrance. Truly it was a monstrous madness for the Israelites to depart from God, to whom they were so many ways beholden. Neither had it been possible that they could have been so bewitched by Satan, unless they had quite forgotten so many miracles, which were as many bonds to keep them in the fear and obedience of God. And, lest there might be

any excuse left to qualify their fault, he ennobles those works with a glorious title, as if he should say the manner of God's dealing was not common, that they might have forgotten it by little and little; but the Israelites had shut their eyes frowardly and wickedly, lest they might have been held back by beholding the glory of God.

12 He wrought wonderfully in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Soan.

13 He cut the sea, and brought them through; and made the waters to stand as a bank.

14 And he led them forth in a cloud by day-time, and all the night-time in the brightness of fire.

15 He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and made them to drink in great depths.

16 And he brought streams out of the rock, and made the waters to gush out like rivers.

12 *He wrought, &c.*] Although he involves their posterity in the guilt, yet begins he fitly therewith to preach of the first ancestors of their nation; as if he should say that all of them, even from their first original, were of a depraved and rebellious disposition. Notwithstanding, as he had said that the children of Ephraim were fallen into apostacy because they had forgotten the wonderful works of God, he pursues the same idea still. And by the way, as I said, he makes an opportune transition to their fathers, to include them in the same charge. In the first place, he touches the miracles that were wrought in the very bosom of Egypt, before the departure of the people; and that it might be the better understood, he names the most famous place of the realm. Afterwards he descends to the passage of the sea, where he repeats that which we have seen heretofore; namely, that the order of nature was reversed, so that the waters were stopped in their course, yea and raised up into huge heaps, as it had been mountains. Thirdly, he declares that God still guided his people on their journey after they had passed the Red sea; and that to the intent the same deliverance should not last for a small time only, he continued his gracious goodness by still stretching out his hand to them. For as it was a hard and troublesome matter to journey through droughty and sandy grounds, it was no small benefit to be sheltered from the heat of the sun by the overcasting of a cloud. But yet was this a pledge of more excellent graciousness; namely, that God avouched this

people to be under his protection until they should come to the inheritance of heaven. Whereupon also Paul, 1 Cor. x. 2, declares that there was a representation of baptism in that cloud, like as there was also in the passing through the sea; the fruit whereof is limited to this life, but extends even to everlasting salvation.

15 *He clave the rocks, &c.*] He alleges another pledge of fatherly love, whereby God shewed what great regard he had of their welfare. And God is not simply said to have given them drink, but to have done it contrary to nature. Indeed, streams do sometimes spring out of rocks; but the rock which Moses smote was utterly dry: whereby it is certain that the water was not fetched out of any spring, but was forced even out of the profoundest depths; as if a man should say, even out of the heart of the earth. Therefore, they attained not to the prophet's meaning, who have expounded it that the Israelites received drink out of the bottomless deeps, because there spouted out abundance of waters to them. Moses rather enhances the miracle, in that God commanded those waters to come gushing out of the most remote veins. The same thing confirms he in the next verse; namely, that there was a large and great stream where there had been no drop of water before. For had there run never so small a rivulet, God's gracious goodness might have been darkened by the heathen. But seeing there gushed out suddenly so great abundance of water, who sees not rather that some vein that lay hidden in the ground was opened, than that the course of nature was changed?

17 Yet continued they still to sin against him, to provoke the Most High in the wilderness.

18 And they tempted God in their heart, to require meat for their soul.

19 And they spake against God, saying; Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?

20 Behold, he struck the rock, and the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; Can he give bread also? or prepare flesh for his people?

21 Therefore the Lord heard it, and was angry: and the fire was kindled in Jacob, and also wrath came upon Israel.

22 Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his help.

17 *Yet continued, &c.*] After the prophet has briefly

shewn that God had manifested, by a continual succession of benefits, how greatly he loved the children of Abraham, now he adds that after he had bound them to him so solemnly, they, according to their custom and nature, rebelled wickedly against him. And first he lays to their charge that they provoked him by wilfully heaping evil upon evil; and afterwards he adds the manner of their provoking. And by the word *provoke*, he signifies that it was no light offence, but intolerable depravity. Moreover, the circumstance of the place also enhances the greatness of the time; that in the very wilderness, when the remembrance of their delivery was yet fresh in their minds, where tokens of God's presence were daily thrust before their eyes, and where even very necessity should have constrained them to obedience, they curbed not their unruliness. Doubtless then, that they behaved themselves so wilfully, even in the presence of God, who made them afraid with the present beholding of his glory, who allured them so gently and sweetly to him, yea, and at such a time as that their want of all things should have been the best remedy to keep them under, it was a portentous madness.

18 *And they tempted God, &c.*] This was the temptation that he spoke of; not that it was unlawful in itself to desire meat if hunger constrained; for who can blame hungry persons for calling upon God their fosterfather? But they sinned in that, being not content with the food which God had appointed them, they let loose the reins of their own lust. For God had at that time begun to feed them with manna, as we shall see again anon. Therefore it was their loathing of that sustenance that drove them to seek a new food, as though they disliked the portion which their father had measured out to them. And when the prophet says that *they required meat for their soul*; he means not that hunger constrained them, but that their lust was not satisfied with the eating of the meat appointed them by God. In respect whereof, he says that they tempted God, because they leaped beyond the bounds limited by God. For whosoever, refusing and neglecting God's allowance, gives liberty to his own unruliness to long for more than is lawful; he is said to tempt God, as if he meant to subject him to his own caprice, or questioned whether he could do more than he listeth to do. And surely, whosoever separates God's power and will asunder, does as much as in him lies to rend him in pieces; and that do they who desire to try whether he will grant more than he hath given leave to request. And therefore, lest the lust of the flesh may stir us to tempt God, let us learn to bridle our desires, and modestly to

content ourselves within the bounds appointed us. For if the flesh wanton without restraint, our daily bread will not content us, but we shall in divers ways clamour against God on every occasion. And as he had said that they tempted God in their hearts, he adds that they were not afraid to utter openly, with unclean and blasphemous lips, the ungodliness which they had conceived inwardly. Whereby it appears the better that their heart was wholly possessed with malice and wickedness. For so does concupiscence breed sin, when it is admitted with unholy consent. Afterwards, the sin itself bursts out further, even as we see that the Israelites proceeded to traitorous wantonness, when they fell to questioning God's power, as though they made no account of it further, than as it served their lust. By *preparing a table*, he means such dainties as they were accustomed to in Egypt. For one single meat could not content their minds, unless they might delight themselves in manifold plenty and variety. When he says, *Behold, God commanded the waters to gush out, &c.*, I have no doubt that he lashes their frowardness with a bitter taunt. For it is not likely that they said so, but rather the prophet, as it were in their person, relates the things that were done before their eyes.

21 *The Lord heard it, &c.*] This hearing of God's imports as much as full and perfect knowledge, by a similitude taken from earthly judges, who cannot punish offenders without perfect knowledge of their case. Therefore, as he is said to hear his servants, whose requests he inclineth to favourably, so again is he said to hear those blasphemies which escape not his vengeance. Notwithstanding, lest the soreness of God's wrath might seem to exceed measure, the prophet describes again the heinousness of their crime; namely, that they believed not God, nor trusted in his help. And he takes it for a thing that cannot be denied, that the promises were made to them, whereunto they ought to have given credit, had not importunate madness driven them quite out of the way. *To trust in God's help*, imports as much as to lean upon his fatherly providence; so that our whole sufficiency may be centred in him. And hereby we gather not only how abominable unbelief is in the sight of God, but also what is the true nature of faith, and what fruits issue out of it. Whence comes it that men submit themselves quietly unto God, but because, being persuaded that their salvation is dear and precious in his sight, they believe also that he will give them whatsoever is expedient, and so they yield themselves up to be ruled at his discretion? It is faith then that is the root of true godliness; it

is faith that teaches us to hope for and to desire all good things at God's hand, and that frameth us to the obeying of him, even as they must needs be always heaving and stirring against God, whosoever they are that distrust him. The prophet's discourse comes to this, that they falsely pretend faith who hope not for welfare at God's hand; because wheresoever God is believed, soon there springs up a confidence of salvation, which attributes to him the praise of all good things.

23 But he had commanded the clouds above, and opened the doors of heaven,

24 And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and given them of the wheat of heaven.

25 Man had eaten the bread of the mighty ones: he had sent them meat, even their fill.

23 *He had commanded, &c.*] They that think this miracle to be reported in the way of a history are far off the mark. Nay rather, the prophet urges the Israelites more sharply by this comparison, that being full fed with manna, they ceased not to lust after the dainties which they knew that God had denied them. For it was a double and treble unthankfulness to refuse the heavenly food, which after a sort made them table-fellows with the angels. If a man that dwells in France or Italy, should grieve that he had not bread of Egypt to feed upon, or wine of Asia to drink, would he not make war against God and nature, as the giants did? But less excusable was the inordinate lust of the Israelites, to whom God not only ministered earthly food as much as they could eat, but also gave them the bread of heaven for their sustenance. If they had suffered hunger for a long time, yet had it become them to ask food of God more modestly. Had they had but bran and chaff to feed upon, yet had it become them to acknowledge God's singular grace, being in the wilderness: yea and had they had but coarse bread allowed them, there had been reason enough why they should give him great thanks. But how much are they now beholden to God, since he hath created a new kind of sustenance, which, as it were by reaching his hand to them out of heaven, he supplieth them with plentifully and copiously. And this is the reason why the manna is called *wheat of heaven*, and *bread of the mighty ones*. Now whereas some take the word אֲבִירִים for *the heavens*, although I reject it not, yet do I like it less than to take it for *angels*, according as the Chaldean translator and others after him

have taken it. True it is, that the miracle is therefore highly magnified, that the wickedness of the people should be made the more detestable: for it was a far more excellent thing for manna to be rained down from heaven, than if they had been fed either with herbs or fruits, or with other increase of the earth. Paul, 1 Cor. xvi. 3, calls the manna *a spiritual meat* in another sense; namely; because it was a figure and symbol of Christ. But here the prophet's intent is to reprove the twofold unthankfulness of the people, in that they despised not only the common meats that come out of the ground, but also the bread of angels. To take away all doubt, I thought best to translate the verbs in the preterpluperfect tense, that the readers might the better understand, that what was done before is called again to remembrance.

26 He made the east wind to go forth in the heavens; and through his power he raised up the south wind.

27 And he rained flesh upon them as it had been dust, and feathered fowls as it had been the sand of the seas;

28 And made it to light in the midst of his camp, round about even into his tents.

29 And they did eat, and were thoroughly filled; and he gave them their longing:

30 They were not weaned from their desire: as yet the meat was in the mouths of them.

31 When the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fat ones of them, and smote down the chosen of Israel.

26 *He made the east wind, &c.*] The prophet shews that God granted the request of his people; not that he inclined favourably to that grudging desire of theirs, but that he shewed by the very effect that it was in his hand to do that which they believed not. Whereby it appears how fondly some interpreters join the flesh and the manna together, the reason of which was altogether different: for in the manna God fulfilled the office of a father. But he satisfied their gluttony with flesh, that their very greediness should choke them. And although it had been no hard matter for God to have created quails in the midst of the wilderness, yet was it his will that they should be brought thither by force

of the winds, that the Israelites might learn that all the elements are obedient to his commands, and that the distance of places is no hindrance but that his power may forthwith pierce from the east into the west. The unbelievers therefore have a manifest proof of the power which they maliciously repined at, since all the elements are ready to obey and speedily to execute whatsoever he hath commanded. Moreover there is no doubt but he raised the winds according to the situation of the camp, although he had been able without any means to bring in flesh among them. And he says that *they ate and were filled*; not only that we might know that they had great store of birds brought unto them wherewith to stuff their bellies even to the full, but also that they were moved to desire flesh of very wantonness, and not for any thought that they took for their sustenance. Indeed he had said erewhile, that they had their fill of manna given them; but in this place he meant expressly to note the riot and ravenousness in which their unbridled greediness betrayed itself. And although in other places God promises it as a singular privilege to the faithful, that he will do whatsoever they wish, yet is he said here to have yielded to the froward requests of the wicked after another manner; because that what he would have denied had he been favourable to them, he now granteth being angry. Which example is worthy to be noted, lest we should complain that our desires are overruled by the secret providence of God, when they are poured forth intemperately. For God doth then truly hear us, when he beareth not with our foolish desires, but tempereth his bounteousness according to the measure of our welfare; like as in being more lavish to the ungodly than is for their behoof, he doth not properly hear them, but overloadeth them with a deadly burden which may thrust them headlong down into destruction. This does he express more clearly soon after, in adding that the same was a fatal pampering to them, as if together with their meat they devoured also the wrath of God. For *not to have been weaned from their desire or longing* imports as much as to have burned still in their own lust. If any object that this agrees not with the last sentence, where it was said that they ate their fill, the solution is easy: for we know, that except men's minds hold themselves within the bounds of reason and temperance, they are insatiable, and therefore, that the heat of their wicked appetite is not quenched with fulness. Some translate it that *they were not disappointed*, and others that *they were not yet glutted with their meat*; which latter translation expresses the meaning of the prophet not amiss, but yet it is far from the word מלא. The prophet therefore

meant to express in two words their present delight; for even when God took vengeance of them, they still wanted in their surfeiting. Now the wrath of God is metaphorically said to *come up upon them*, when he riseth up suddenly to judgment; because as long as he maketh as though he saw not their sins, he seemeth after a sort to be asleep. And although the punishment attacked all orders, yet does the prophet name *the fat and chosen ones* advisedly, that God's judgment might shine forth the brighter: for it happened not by chance, that the plague despatched the strongest and such as were the lustiest among them. Again, as commonly men are deceived in their own strength, so they exalt themselves against God the more boldly, because forgetting their own infirmity, they think they may do what they list. Therefore it is no marvel though God's wrath were the fiercer and sorer against them.

32 For all this they sinned still, and believed not his wondrous works.

33 And he consumed their days in vanity, and their years in haste.

34 When he slew them, they sought him; they returned and made haste unto God early.

35 And they remembered that God was their Rock, and that the high God was their Deliverer.

36 And they flattered him with their mouth, and dissembled with him with their tongue:

37 But their heart was not right before him, neither were they faithful in his covenant.

32 *For all this, &c.*] It is a common proverb, that fools get wise by flogging. Whence it follows that they are utterly past hope, who are often chastised of God, and yet are never the better. Such a stubbornness the prophet describes in the Israelites, who could by no scourges be amended. It was a dreadful vengeance of God, to see so great a slaughter of the strongest and lustiest men. Therefore that they were not moved with so monstrous a sight, their portentous hardihood is demonstrated. Though by *the wonderful works* he means not only the plague, whereof he spoke just now, but also comprehends the other tokens whereof mention has been made. Therefore he accuses them of twofold iniquity, not only for discrediting God's word, but also for despising his miracles. And therefore he adds that their plagues were increased, according as God avoucheth

and threateneth by Moses, that he will deal sevenfold harder with the wilful that persist in their wickedness. However, as he speaks here of the whole people, as if he should say that all without exception were swiftly consumed, even from the smallest to the greatest, it might by likelihood of reason be referred to that most grievous plague which was established by an oath; namely, that they should all perish in the wilderness, saving only two, namely, Joshua and Caleb, because being now near the land of Canaan, they turned back again. Therefore, after they had barred themselves from entrance, that innumerable multitude perished in the desert within forty years' space. He puts *days* in the former place and *years* in the second, as if he should say that the time of their life was cut off by the curse of God, so that it might easily appear that they failed even in the midst of their race. Their *days* then were consumed *in vanity*, because they vanished away as smoke; and *their years in haste*, because they passed as swiftly away as a stream. Some translate בְּהֵלָה *fear*, but I like better to have it translated *tumult*. For doubtless the prophet's meaning is that their life was broken off tumultuously. Nevertheless I would not alter the term *haste*, which was the clearer: now then, the withering of their strength, whereof they were so proud, and their swift passing away as a shadow, was a just reward of their wilfulness.

34 *When he slew them, &c.*] By this circumstance he aggravates their fault. For since that being convicted of their wickedness, they acknowledge themselves to be justly punished, and yet humble not themselves with unfeigned mind, but rather mock God by wicked dissimulation, their wickedness is the less to be excused. If a man that is out of his mind feel not his own evils, his insensibility is to be borne with. But as for him that is constrained to acknowledge his own misdemeanor, and yet continues still the same, or else, after a little coloured shew of sorrow, returns again to his former disposition, he by his hollow-heartedness shews himself to be incurable. Now then the prophet gives an inkling that they were no common or ordinary plagues, whereby that stiff-necked nation was driven to seek God. And he relates not only that they were convicted of wickedness, but also that they were touched with the feeling and remembrance of that redemption from which they were fallen. By this means is the pretence of ignorance the more effectually taken away, as if he should say they were not carried away inadvertently, or deceived by error, but had provoked God's wrath against themselves by dealing treacherously, even of set purpose; according as God opened

their eyes to this end, that he might bare their desperate wilfulness the more openly, as though he would shake off their hypocrisy and self-soothing, and draw them out of their lurking-places into the light. And the prophet, blaming their hollowness, in that they neither confessed their fault with unfeigned heart, nor truly attributed the glory of their deliverance unto God, says that *they flattered him with their mouths, and dissembled with their tongue*; not because they made no acknowledgment at all, but because the confession of the mouth, coming not from the heart, was not willing, which is a thing worthy to be marked. For hereby we gather that not only gross hypocrisy is to be shunned, which is when men's tongues utter one thing and their hearts think another, but also that deeper dissimulation is to be eschewed, when the sinner, being forced by fear, fawns upon God slavishly, and yet could find in his heart to shun his judgment. But the greater part are sick unto death of this disease, for although the majesty of God force them to some kind of awe, yet could they find in their hearts that all light of doctrine were quenched. Wherefore it is not enough to assent to God's word, unless there go with it an earnest affection towards it, so that our heart be not double nor divided. The prophet therefore points out that the cause and fountain of this dissimulation was, that they were not *steadfast and true-hearted*; as if he should say, all is taken but for leasing and deceit before God, which proceedeth not from unfeigned purity of heart. Now, as such soundness is required everywhere in the law, he accuses them of covenant-breaking, who had not observed God's covenant with such faithfulness as became them. For, as I have said heretofore, there is a mutual relation to be observed between our faith and God's covenant, so that the unfeigned assent of the one may answer to the truthfulness of the other.

38 And he of his mercy cleansed their iniquity, and destroyed them not: and he multiplied to turn away his anger, and did not stir up all his wrath:

39 And he remembered that they were but flesh; a spirit that passeth, and cometh not again.

40 How often did they provoke him in the desert, and grieve him in the wilderness!

41 And they went to it again, and tempted God, and set bounds about the Holy One of Israel.

38 *And he, &c.*] That it may the better appear that there was no means of bending them, that they might return to

their right mind, he says now that God bare with many sins of theirs, and yet that as often as he forgave them, they continued no less wicked in abusing his gentleness than they had been stubborn against his severity. By the way he shews the reason why they perished not altogether. For though they had all of them deserved destruction, yet he declares that God tempered his displeasure, that there might remain some seed of them. Therefore, lest any man might, by those examples of vengeance, gather that God dealt with extreme rigour, the prophet tells us here that the plagues were moderate, or rather mild in comparison of the heinousness of their offences. For God withheld his hand, not so much respecting what they had deserved, as minding to give place to his own mercy; yet is there no cause why we should imagine God to be changeable, when he one while chastiseth us somewhat sharply, and another while allureth us to him gently. For according to his incomparable wisdom, he trieth us by divers ways, whether there be any hope of recovery. But hereby increases our guilt, if neither his severity can correct us, nor his mercy melt us. And it is to be noted, that whereas God spared his people, the cause is ascribed to his mercy, which resides in him naturally; that we may know that there was no other thing that led him to be so forward and willing to forgive. Moreover, as God bare with them more times and more ways than one, the prophet says *he cleansed their iniquity, that he might not destroy them*; and again, that whereas he had been oftentimes provoked, yet he ceased not to turn away his anger; and finally, that he mitigated his plagues, lest the grievousness of them might have overwhelmed his people.

39 *And he remembered, &c.*] Now he alleges another cause; that is, that God would not try his strength against men who are by nature frail and shadowy: for the expressions he uses denote the frailness by which man's state is made miserable. The scripture very often matches the *flesh* and the *spirit* in the way of contrariety one against another; not only when by *flesh* is meant our corrupt and sinful nature, and by *spirit* the uprightness to which the children of God are restored, but also when men are called *flesh* because there is nothing firm or substantial in them: as in Isaiah, xxxi. 3; *Egypt is flesh and not spirit*. But in this place the prophet has put the words *flesh* and *spirit* both in one sense; meaning by the first word that men are subject to corruption and decay; and by the other, that they are but a blast or shadow of some kind or other. For as the continual decay of men forces them to destruction, he compares them to a wind that passes away, and such a one as falls of its

own accord, and comes not again. For when we have run our race, we begin not a new life again upon earth, according as in Job, xiv. 7, it is said that trees spring again from year to year, and the herbs that were dead in the winter become green again. But man, after he is once gone, recovers his strength no more. Now we understand the prophet's meaning; namely, that God for his own mercy's sake bare with the Jews, not because they were worthy, but because their transitory and frail state obtained indulgence for them. An almost similar sentence shall we have in Psalm ciii. 13, 14, 15, and 16, where the prophet will say that God is merciful to us, because he seeth we are like grass, and that we soon wither away like hay. Now if God find nothing in us (but misery) whereby he may be moved to mercy, it follows that it is nothing but his own free goodness that leadeth him to sustain us. Nevertheless, when the prophet denies that men return any more when they have run out their race, he is far from excluding the hope of the resurrection: for he only considers men in themselves, and speaks only of their state on earth. As for the renewing of man unto the heavenly life, it is a miracle far surpassing nature. In the same sense it is said in another place, *His spirit goeth forth, and shall not return again*, Wisdom, xvi. 14: for doubtless men bring not the hope of future restoration with them out of their mother's womb, but it must be fetched from the grace of regeneration.

40 *How often did they, &c.*] He confirms the last sentence; namely, because they had provoked God so often in the wilderness with the boundless accumulation of their sins, so that they must needs have perished a thousand times if God had not a thousand times shewn them favour. And the interrogation expresses more vehemently that they observed no measure in their sinning. The name of *wilderness* contains in it the circumstance as well of place as of time, as though the prophet should cast in their teeth their churlishness, in that they were not at least withheld by God's so recent benefits, or rather by the daily beholding of them; and, secondly, should condemn their violent headiness, in that they had heaped up so many sins within so short a time. In the same sense he adds, immediately after, that they went to it again and tempted God. For the words *went to it again*, do not signify here a change, but a continual holding on in sin. And he expresses, by a goodly metaphor, what heinous indignity men offer to God when they tempt him. For the word *תָּוַח*, which he uses, signifies properly *to mark out*, or *describe*. But he teaches, that when the people had adventured to prescribe means to God

according to their own pleasure, he was as it were enclosed within pales, and his immeasurable power circumscribed by the narrow bounds which infidelity suggests. And verily, as often as men go no further than their own carnal understanding, it is as if they would measure God by their own small capacity, which is but to pluck him down from his throne.

42 They remembered not his hand in the day that he delivered them from the oppressor :

43 When he set his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Soan.

44 When he turned their rivers into blood; and their streams, that they could not drink.

45 He sent a swarm among them, which devoured them; and the frog, which destroyed them.

46 And he gave their fruits unto the caterpillar, and their labour to the grasshopper.

47 And he killed their vines with hail; and their wild fig-trees with the hailstone.

48 And he gave their cattle to the hail, and their flocks to the thunderbolts.

49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his displeasure, even anger, wrathfulness and vexation, and set evil angels among them.

50 He made a way to his anger: he spared not their soul from death, and he shut up their cattle into the plague.

51 And he smote all the first-born in Egypt: the beginning of strength in the tents of Ham.

42 *They remembered not, &c.*] He proceeds in his upbraiding, because the only remembrance of God's benefits might have bridled them, if they had not enviously and wilfully put out of mind whatsoever things they had experienced. Out from this ungodly forgetfulness springs all frowardness and rebellion. That the hand of God is taken for his power by the figure metonymy, is well enough known. Now in that first deliverance of the people, God's hand was stretched out after a strange and unwonted manner. And therefore so much the more detestable was the ungodliness of the people, against which the prophet now inveighs; namely, to esteem as nothing, or straightway to bury, that which no continuance of time ought to have put

out of their minds. Furthermore, he mentions certain examples of God's mighty working, which he calls first *signs*, and afterwards *wonders*, that he may again rebuke the abominable dulness of the people. And although he speaks one thing twice, yet in the second member there is added a reason, as if he should say they were stricken in fear by such means as had never been heard of, which ought not to vanish out of the people's minds so quickly.

44 *He turned their, &c.*] He enumerates not in order the miracles by which God avouched his power in the deliverance of his people, for it was enough for him to put them in remembrance of the known histories that might suffice to detect the people's malice and unthankfulness: neither is it needful to stand longer upon these things, seeing that Moses' history shews more at large what are recited here in brief. This only let the readers bear away, that although God at sundry other times punisheth the sins of the heathen with hail and other calamities, yet whatsoever happened at that time in Egypt was extraordinary, and never heard of before. And therefore the prophet amplifies these notable scourges of God with many words, as that *he sent the fierceness of his displeasure, anger, wrath, and anguish*. For to this end makes the heaping up of these words, namely, that the drowsy minds should be awakened at such a cloud of miracles, whereof both the number and the excellence was to be felt, even by them that are blind. Finally he adds, that God *executed these judgments by angels*. For although he hath appointed certain laws to heaven and earth at his pleasure, and so governeth the whole order of nature, that each creature has its proper duty and office, yet notwithstanding, as often as he listeth he useth the ministration of angels in the execution of his commandments, not by familiar or natural means, but by secret power, and to be incomprehensible. Some think that they are devils who are spoken of here, because they are termed *evil* or *hurtful angels*; and I disallow it not, saving that the reason whereon they lean is somewhat of the weakest. For they say, that as God dispenseth his benefits unto us by his elect angels, so also he executeth his wrath upon us by his reprobate angels, as if they were his tormentors. Which, although I confess to be true in part, yet I deny it to hold always; for many texts of scripture occur to the contrary. For who made the great slaughter in the army of the Assyrians, and drove them from the siege of the holy city, 2 Kings, xix. 35, but the angel that was appointed at that time for the defence of the city? So also the angel that slew the first-born of Egypt, Exodus xi. 5, was not only a

minister and executor of God's wrath against the Egyptians, but also a preserver of the welfare of the Israelites. Again; at such time as covetous and bloody kings, or rather robbers, confounded heaven and earth together, yet does Daniel, xx. 13, avouch that holy angels were appointed to have charge of them. And although it is likely that the Egyptians were given over and made thralls to reprobate angels, according as they deserved, yet we may take the angels to be termed *hurtful* in this place, by reason of their working, because they punished the enemies of God's people with adversity and plagues to repress their tyranny and cruelty. For after this sort, as well the heavenly and chosen angels, as also the wicked fiends are accounted ministers of hurt or annoyance, but after divers manners. For the former render willing obedience to God; but the other, as they are always eager to do hurt, and long to have the whole world turned upside down, are fit instruments to inflict calamities.

50 *He made a way, &c.*] Once again he repeats that God's wrath overflowed Egypt like a rushing torrent, lest he might leave the thankless people any excuse, because such evident and notable proofs of the goodness shewn them could not hold them in subjection to God. At length the prophet touches upon the miracle that was wrought last; namely, that God by the hand of his angel slew all the first-born of Egypt in one night. And according to the common and accustomed phrase of the Hebrew tongue, he calls them the *firstlings of strength*; for although, when they have run through their course of years, old men draw towards death, yet, as they are after a sort renewed in their issue, and so recover the strength that was decayed in themselves, the renown of their *strength* is conveyed over to their children. And therefore the first-born are termed the *beginning*, according as I have declared more fully Gen. xlix. 3. He calls the houses of Egypt *the tents of Ham*, because Misraim, who gave the name to the country, was the son of Ham, Gen. x. 6. Furthermore, the prophet commends here the free love of God towards the posterity of Shem, in that he preferred them before the children of Ham, when notwithstanding they excelled not for any worth of their own.

52 And he made his people to go out like sheep, and led them in the wilderness like a flock.

53 And he carried them forth in safety, and they were not afraid: and the sea covered their enemies.

54 And he brought them into the borders of his

sanctuary, even to this hill, which he hath purchased with his right hand.

55 And he drave out the heathen before them, and cast them into the lot of his inheritance; and made the children of Israel to dwell in their tents.

56 And they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies.

57 And they turned back, and dealt falsely, as their fathers did: they started back like a deceitful bow.

58 And they provoked him to anger with their high places: and stirred him to wrath with their graven images.

52 *And he made, &c.*] Again he sets out God's fatherly love towards his chosen people, whom, as we have said erewhile, he likens to a flock of sheep, because they had not had any counsel or help at all to maintain themselves, if God had not vouchsafed to take upon him the office and charge of a shepherd. And it is more than an ordinary token of God's love, that he disdained not to humble himself so far as to feed his own sheep. Neither was an unwarlike multitude able to do anything against stout and warlike enemies. For we know that the people were for a time put to degrading occupations, as though they had been condemned to mines of metal or stone. And he says *they were led forth without fear*; not that they leaned fearlessly and with quiet minds upon God, but because as long as God was their guide and the maintainer of their welfare, they had had no just cause to be afraid, had not their own unbelief forced them to fear. And thence came these murmuring speeches, *Why hath God cast us into these straits? Was there not room enough to bury us in Egypt?* Exod. xiv. 11. This fearlessness then is not referred to the feeling of the people, but to the defence of God, whereby it came to pass that their enemies were drowned, and they rested quietly in the wilderness. Also he recites other benefits of God, and therewith other transgressions which more bewray the thanklessness of the people; that is, that having obtained the heritage that was promised them, as though they were nothing beholden to God, they were always of a wilful and untractable nature. The closing act of their deliverance was the putting them in possession of the land of Canaan, from entering which they had debarred themselves, but that God was determined, notwithstanding their wickedness, to finish in all points the thing he had begun. Furthermore,

he terms the land itself *the bounds or borders of God's sanctuary*, because God in assigning it to his people had also hallowed it to himself. Whereby it appears that the people's iniquity was the more foul in bringing the same defilements thither with which it had been polluted theretofore. For what madness was it for the people of Israel to contend with the former inhabitants in all kinds of wickedness, seeing *they* knew they were driven out for their abominations? as though they were deliberately bent to bring the same vengeance of God upon their own heads which they had seen executed upon others. What he afterwards adds, *this hill*, some, in my judgment, extend improperly to the whole land, which though it was full of hills, yet had it also plain and level grounds of sufficient breadth and length. Wherefore I doubt not but he added *mount Sion* by way of honour for amplification, as the place where God had chosen to himself his habitation and chief seat. I confess indeed that it is a synecdoche, only let the readers bear in mind that that place is expressed precisely, from whence as from the wellhead issued the holiness of the whole land. He says that *this hill was possessed or purchased by the right hand of God*, (for the word קנה signifies either,) lest the Israelites should vaunt themselves as though they had conquered the land, or were settled in the possession of it by their own sword, according as has been said in Ps. xlv. 3, 4; *For it was not their own sword that made them inherit the land, nor their own arm that saved them; but it was thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a love to us.* And immediately follows the exposition of it, that *the heathen were driven out, and put into the lot of his inheritance*, by which words the prophet determines the manner of their coming by it; as if he should have said, that neither the people of Israel had been so warlike, nor those heathen nations so cowardly, unless the victory had been gotten under the conduct and by the power of God. Besides this, the possession had not been lawful except God, who spoiled the former inhabitants, had willed strangers to succeed to their place and right.

56 *And they tempted, &c.*] Here he upbraids them, that being signalized with so many benefits, they ceased not to behave themselves treacherously; but rather, whereas they were from time to time called back to their obedience by new benefits, they of wilful stubbornness shook off the yoke. What the word *tempt* imports, we have told you heretofore. But the prophet adds generally, that *they had provoked him, because they had not kept his covenant.* And by this

last part their open and gross rebelliousness is the better demonstrated in that being gently admonished of their duty, they did nevertheless refuse to be subject unto God. For he calls the law *testimonies*, because God in that form of contract had bound his people to him, even as men are wont to agree upon certain conditions. Now, then, although he has in no light degree galled them in these words, yet in twitting them afterwards with their apostacy or backsliding, and falseheartedness, he makes up the heap of their guilt. God had adopted them to be his people: they, despising his favour, wilfully renounce it. He had gathered them together under his wings: they run abroad frowardly, scattering themselves here and there. He had promised to be a father to them: they refuse to be his children. He had shewn them the way of salvation: they cast themselves wilfully into destruction by going out of the way. The prophet therefore concludes that they were always an ungodly and wicked people. And again it is to be noted, that no fault is more grievously condemned in the posterity than that they were too like their fathers, lest any man might deceive himself by froward following of his ancestors' steps, as though it were a just excuse wherewith to defend himself. Afterwards also he most aptly expresses their fickleness by a similitude which Hosea, vii. 16, uses also. For as those archers are deceived, that have a bow which is either too weak or ill bent, or crooked and awry, so says he, this people started back and shrunk away with their slippery and tortuous wiliness, that they might not be ruled by the hand of God.

58 *They provoked, &c.*] He alleges the species of defection by which the Israelites openly shewed that they denied any obligation and allegiance to God. For they had had warning enough, and too much, that God's service was perverted and defiled unless they depended upon his word. But now, casting aside his whole law, they broke forth into their own fantastical devices. And this is the fruit which contempt of the law brings forth; namely, that they who had rather follow their own understanding, than submit themselves to God, give themselves over to gross superstitions. Also, he complains that the service of God was impeached two ways: first, by their defacing God's glory, in making to themselves idols and graven images; and, secondly, by devising foreign and forbidden ceremonies to pacify God with.

59 God heard it, and was wroth, and abhorred Israel exceedingly.

60 And he forsook his habitation of Shiloh, the tabernacle where he dwelt among men ;

61 And he gave his strength into thralldom, and his beauty into the hand of the adversary.

62 And he shut up his people into the sword; and was angry with his own inheritance.

63 The fire devoured his chosen ; and his maidens were not praised.

64 His priests fell upon the sword ; and his widows mourned not.

65 And the Lord awaked as one asleep, as a strong man that crieth out through wine.

66 And he smote his enemies behind, and put them to an endless shame.

59 *God heard it, &c.*] Again the prophet shews that when God saw he could do no good by his long-suffering, which the people, not without mocking, perverted to greater liberty of sinning, he took sore punishment of them. And the similitude which he draws from earthly judges is common in scripture. For God is said to hear, not because he hath need to make inquisition, but because he rusheth not forth to judgment unadvisedly, lest any man might think him precipitate. The effect is, that the people continued their wickedness, so that at length the cry of it mounted up into heaven; and the very grievousness of the punishment argues the heinousness of the offence. For after he has said that Israel, whom God had loved so much, was become abominable, now he adds that it was bereft and despoiled of God's presence, which was its only felicity, yea, and only comfort in adversity. The abhorring of Israel, therefore, was this; when God suffered the ark of the covenant to be carried into another country, and he himself removing out of Judah, bade the people farewell. It is out of all doubt that God was not tied to the visible symbol; but, as he had given the same as an assurance of his communion with the people, by the taking away of that he testified that he himself also departed. Now, as the continual abode of the ark was in Shiloh, and that it was there captured by the Philistines, 1 Sam. iv. 11, it is called *the habitation, or dwelling-place of God*. But the manner of his dwelling is expressed beautifully a little after; namely, because it was his dwelling among men. For although God filleth both heaven and earth, yet, as we attain not to his immeasurable loftiness, coming down to us by his

power and grace, so far as is expedient, and as our limited capacity will bear, he maketh himself near unto us. And it is a very forcible manner of speaking, that God was so displeased with the continual wickedness of his people, that he was fain to forsake the only place which he had chosen to himself upon earth. In the next verse he pursues the same subject, saying that *the strength* of God, whereby the Israelites had been shielded and defended, was then *taken prisoner*. Not that his might was tied to the outward symbol, but in respect that he had set himself against the enemies heretofore, it was his will that the grace wherewith he had defended his people should after a sort be taken prisoner. And yet is not this referred to the Philistines, as though they had gotten God into their hands. But the prophet means simply that the Israelites were despoiled and stripped of God's defence, and so fell into the hands of their enemies, even as an army is put to the rout when the general is taken prisoner. The ark is also termed *the beauty of God*; because, as he was invisible of himself, he took that shape upon him, or he made that as a mirror, wherein he might be seen. And although it is a bold, yea and, to our seeming, an absurd hyperbole, that the strength of God was taken prisoner by the Philistines, yet is it used advisedly, to enhance the wickedness of his people. For as he was wont to stretch out the power of his arm mightily to help his people, the offences must needs be grievous that displeased him so sore as to suffer that symbol of his power to be taken away forcibly by heathen people. Concerning that which is reported here of Shiloh, Jeremiah, vii. 12, teaches that it touches all such as falsely vaunt themselves under a vain pretence of God's presence. *Go your ways into Shiloh*, says he, *and see what infamy God hath brought upon that place where his majesty shone in time past!* And therefore, except we receive God heartily with such reverence as becomes us when he approacheth us familiarly, it is to be feared lest it fall out with us as it did with the people of Shiloh. So much the more rank then is the bragging of the pope and his adherents, who extol the see of Rome only with this title, because the church has flourished in old time in Rome. As though, forsooth, Christ, who is the true temple of the godhead, were not born in Bethlehem, and brought up in Nazareth, or as though he had not dwelt and preached in Capernaum and Jerusalem, the desolation of which cities forms a terrible scene of God's wrath.

62 *He shut up his, &c.*] He recites other parts of the overthrow that was received under the high priest Eli. By the departure of the ark, God shewed that he had with-

drawn his favour from his people. The same also proved he by deed: for all that were in the vigour of life, God's wrath consumed; which the prophet denotes metaphorically by the name of *fire*. *For there perished of the chosen of Israel to the number of thirty thousand, 1 Sam. iv. 10, by the sword of the enemy, and not by fire.* But by this means is expressed the sudden violence, to put them in fear, as if he should say they were quickly devoured, like as chaff is consumed with fire. This slaughter he enhances with another figure, that for want of men the maidens continued unmarried. For he says they *were not praised*, because they were wont in marriages to sing bridal songs. And it increases the grief, that the very priests themselves, whom God had peculiarly received into his protection, perished with the rest. When he says that *the widows mourned not*, I take it thus; either that they died for sorrow prematurely, or else that when they were led captive by their enemies, they were prohibited to mourn. And in these words he meant to teach briefly that there was nothing wanting which might make up the full measure of misery.

65 *And the Lord, &c.*] Some will have this to be spoken of the Israelites; and others, of their enemies. If the first application be approved, it is no marvel though the Israelites are termed God's enemies, like as in Isaiah, i. 24, *Ah, I must avenge myself of mine enemies!* And the meaning will be, that the Israelites paid dearly for perverting God's patience to licentiousness, because he awoke suddenly, and fell upon them with greater fury. But as we see that the prophets fetch their doctrine out of Moses, and also frame their words according to the same pattern, no less allowable is the opinion of them who understand it of the Philistines. For this our prophet seems to have borrowed this order from the song of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 27, where God avoucheth that he doth not so punish his people as not to curb their enemies in turn. For considering that it is a common proverb, that the fate of wars is uncertain; if there had followed no change, this punishment might have been the more obscure. But seeing that God, after he had brought the Israelites under foot, turned the plague upon the conquerors, without man's hand, beyond all worldly expectation, and contrary to accustomed wont; hereby it appears the better, that the Israelites were not laid low otherwise than by God. By the way the prophet teaches us at the same time, that God was constrained of necessity to punish somewhat more severely than he would have done, because in scourging the Philistines afterwards, he signally maintained his covenant, which he might seem to have

utterly forgotten. For although he had after a sort taken part with the Philistines for a time, yet would he not utterly cast away his love towards the children of Abraham, lest his faith should be rendered vain. For although the similitude of the drunken man is somewhat of the harshest, yet is it not used without good reason, because it is applied to the stupor of the people: for had they been of a pure and unclouded understanding, God would not have so transformed himself, nor taken upon him another character. Therefore it was the people's drunkenness, that is to say, their insensibility, that made him liken himself to a drunken man, which was a foul reproach to them. As to God, the similitude is no derogation at all of his glory: unless he redress our miseries with speed, he seemeth to be asleep. But whence comes this sleep, seeing that in strength he is superior to all the giants, who can easily away with long watching, and are satisfied with little sleep. His forbearing is taken by dullards as though he himself were stupified. And he says that God's sudden awaking shall trouble them more than if he had lifted up his hand against them at the first; even as if a drunken giant, having not yet slept off his surfeit, should start up suddenly out of his sleep. When he says the enemies were stricken behind in the hinder parts, many restrain it to the plague wherewith the Philistines were stricken, 1 Sam. v. 12. And the term of *endless shame* agrees with it, because the punishing of them with hemorrhoids in their hinder parts was reproachful. But as the words admit a more simple sense, namely, that they were stricken behind, I leave it indifferent.

67 And he refused the tent of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim ;

68 But he chose the tribe of Judah, the hill of Sion which he loved.

69 And he built up his sanctuary as the high places, as the earth which he hath established for ever.

70 And he chose David his servant, and took him from the sheep-folds.

71 Even from behind the ewes with young took he him, to feed in Jacob his people, and in Israel his inheritance.

72 And he fed them in the singleness of his heart, and led them forth in the discretion of his hands.

67 *And he, &c.*] They who suppose that the Israelites were just now called God's enemies, connect these verses together, as if the prophet should say the wound that God gave them was incurable. But I, who am of another opinion, namely, that God, in punishing the Philistines so sore, made it apparent that the covenant between him and his people, whereof he had been so severe an avenger, was not disannulled, rather take it that this is added in way of correction; as if the prophet had said that God was not yet so fully pacified with the wicked backsliders, but that there appeared a remnant of the plagues still. In my opinion, therefore, the meaning of the text is this; that when the ark was captured by the Philistines, God was after a sort asleep, because he was made drunk with the sins of his people, so that he could not keep watch for the defence of them as he had been wont to do; and yet that he did not long lie benumbed with sleep, but as soon as the heathen nation mocked at his glory, he was aroused by so heinous a despite, as if a giant should start up from sleep in the midst of his surfeit; and yet conceived not such displeasure at the heathen and uncircumcised nation, but that there remained some signs of their chastisement in this wicked and thankless people of Israel, even unto the end. To this purpose tends the refusal which he speaks of now, that the Israelites were bereft of the privilege of honour wherewith God had adorned them, when he was content to have his ark carried away to another place. Two points, therefore, are to be noted here; first, as the Philistines were stricken with unseemly sores, it appeared by evident proof that it happened not otherwise than by God's appointment that the Israelites were vanquished by them. For neither did God recover new strength, or gather a new host to set upon the conquerors within awhile after, neither was he helped in the matter by foreign aid. The other point is, that although God stretched out his hand against the Philistines, to shew himself to have yet still some remembrance of his covenant, and care of his elect people; yet he did not so set up the people of Israel again, but that his forsaking of Shiloh was a perpetual monument of his displeasure. Therefore, he refused the tribe of Ephraim, not that he had cast them off for ever, or severed them altogether from the rest of the body of his church, but because he would not have his ark to rest any more there. For the tribe of Ephraim is here contrasted with the tribe of Judah, where God chose for himself his dwelling-place afterwards. In thiswise the prophet begins to shew that when the abiding-place was appointed for the ark of the covenant upon mount

Sion, the people were after a sort renewed again, and, the symbol of reconciliation being restored to them, brought home again from banishment, to the grace from which they were fallen away. For as God had after a sort been thrust out of the realm, and his strength led away captive through the default of the Israelites, it was requisite for them to be taught by this remembrance that their offences displeased God so sore, that for very loathing he could not abide the sight of his former dwelling. Now then although after the separation, that the people should look better to themselves thereafter, there was no full and perfect restitution, yet was it a point of no small mercy that God chose a steadfast abiding-place for his ark again. And as the ark, after the return thereof, wandered in Gath and Ekron, and in other places, until mount Sion was pointed out by miracle; there is no regard had of the mean time, because the prophet's purpose went no further than to commit to memory as well the example of the punishment, as also God's gracious and unhopèd-for goodness. That is also to be borne in mind which is often repeated in Moses, *when the Lord shall have chosen himself a place for thee to call upon his name in*. Again, because Shiloh had obtained such great renown by reason of the continual abode of the ark there; after the ark was conveyed to the enemies, men's minds were in a strange perplexity till the election of the place was known. And although the ten tribes were not cast off at that time, but had their interest in the kingdom and the priesthood, as well as the tribe of Judah, yet, in process of time, their own rebellion cut them quite off. And this is the cause why the prophet says in way of despite, that the tribe of Ephraim was refused, and that the tribe of Joseph, from whence it had its original, was not chosen.

68 *But he chose, &c.*] Namely, because he preferred it before the rest of his people, and chose out of it the king whom he minded to set as well over all the Israelites as over the Jews alone. And he chose *mount Sion*, appointing it to be the abode of the sanctuary. Furthermore, lest the cause should be sought for, apart from God, the prophet says that the preferring of mount Sion before all other places, and the garnishing thereof with so great excellence, came of God's free election. For the relative *which*, is put here instead of *for*, the adverb of cause; as if he had said that the sanctuary of God was established there, not for the worthiness of the place, but for the only good pleasure of God. For no less free ought this latter restitution of the people to be, than was their first adoption when God made his covenant with Abraham, or when he delivered his people out of

Egypt. And the *loving* of the place, had respect to the men. Whence it follows that the church has always, from the beginning, been gathered together through the mere grace and bounteousness of God, because that neither could there be ever found any inward worthiness in man, and also it is too precious a thing to depend upon the power of men. In the next verse the prophet means only that mount Sion had a singular beauty given unto it, which must however be referred to the heavenly pattern. For it was not God's will that the minds of his servants should be occupied either about the goodliness of the building, or in the pomp of the ceremonies; but to lift them up to Christ, in whom the truth of the shadows was exhibited. Therefore, he says that *the sanctuary was builded as the high things*, that is to say, it was conspicuous even among the high mountains: like as Isaiah, ii. 2, and Micah, iv. 1, where they prophesy of the building of the new and spiritual temple, say it shall be set upon the top of mountains, that it may tower above all hills. And we know that towers were in those days set upon high places. Afterwards he compares Sion to the whole compass of the earth: for although it happen to some several countries to suffer earthquake, or to perish by the opening of the earth, or to be troubled by some violent concussion, or to endure some alteration; yet the body itself of the earth abides steady and sure, because it is grounded upon deep foundations. The prophet therefore means that the building whereof he speaks is not temporal, as the sumptuous palaces of kings, which either decay in process of time, or are in danger of destruction diverse ways, but is founded to stand whole and sound even to the end of the world. If any man make exception that that temple was destroyed by the Chaldeans and Assyrians, it is easy to be answered, that this substantial soundness which the prophet commends consists not but in Christ alone. For if the old and typical sanctuary be considered in itself, it shall be but an insubstantial spectre. But as God's will was that it should be an assured token of Christ to come, everlastingness is justly attributed unto it; even as it is said in another place, *he hath laid the foundations thereof in the holy hills*, Psalm lxxxvi. 1. Also in Isaiah, xiv. 32, he is said to have *laid the foundation of Sion with his own hand*. And again, Psalm lxxiv. 2, he is said to *dwell in it*, so that it should never be moved.

70 *And he hath chosen.*] After he has made mention of the temple, he passes also to the kingdom; for these two were the chief signs of God's election and grace, like as Christ also hath appeared our king and priest to bring us

full salvation. And he proves David to have been created king by God, inasmuch as he was raised from the sheepfold, and from keeping of cattle, unto the royal throne. For this exchange does not a little set forth God's grace, that a rustic was taken up out of his homely cottage, and made king. And the prophet restrains not this grace to the person of David, but he gives us to understand that whatsoever worthiness was in the children of Abraham, the same flowed out of the fountain of God's mercy. For the whole glory and happiness of that people was contained in the kingdom and priesthood; both which he ascribes to the only goodwill of God. And therefore it behoved the beginning of Christ's reign to be lowly and despicable, that it might be conformable to the figure thereof, and that God might shew openly that he used no outward helps in the compassing of our salvation. He commends God's gracious goodness by another circumstance, in that David of a keeper of sheep was made the shepherd of the elect people and heritage of God. And although it is an allusion to David's former state, yet the Holy Ghost teacheth how much lawful kings, whom it behoves to be as shepherds, differ from tyrants, robbers, and rapacious extortioners. Afterwards he adds that he executed faithfully the charge that was enjoined him. Whereby also is indirectly rebuked the unthankfulness and depravity of the people, who not only defeated the holy and inviolable order of God, but also, shaking off his healthful yoke, did cast themselves into miserable dismemberment. That which follows concerning the *discretion of his hands*, seems to be improperly spoken. Nevertheless, the prophet meant to express forcibly that David was not only fortunate in his acts, but also governed by the Spirit of God so that he put not forth his hand unadvisedly to any work, but directed them promptly and skilfully whithersoever faith and duty called them; and thus, in the success of his undertakings, the glory of his wisdom shone brighter than his good fortune.

PSALM LXXIX.

It is a complaint and moan of the church sorely afflicted, wherein, although the faithful bewail their own piteous and unmerited disasters, and accuse their enemies of cruelty, yet they confess themselves justly chastened, and flee with lowliness unto God's mercy; chiefly upon this hope, because they see God's dishonour coupled with their calamities, while the ungodly blaspheme his holy name by oppressing his church.

[*A Psalm of Asaph.*]

1 O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; they have defiled the temple of thy holiness; they have put Jerusalem into heaps.

2 They have given the carcases of thy servants to be meat unto the fowls of the air, and the flesh of thy meek ones unto the beasts of the earth.

3 They have shed their blood like water round about Jerusalem: and there was none to bury them.

4 We have been a reproach to our neighbours, a jesting-stock and a mocking to those that be round about us.

1 *O God, the heathen, &c.*] This Psalm, among others, shews plainly that it was made long after David's decease. For whereas some, in way of excuse, say that the afflictions of the church were foretold by the spirit of prophecy, that they who were to come might be encouraged to bear the cross, it is void of reason. For neither are the prophets wont to speak thus historically in their prophecies, and whosoever shall weigh the context with sound judgment will easily see it was made either at such time as the temple was burnt up, and the city overthrown by the Assyrians, and the people led into captivity, or else at such time as the temple was defiled by Antiochus with much slaughter; for the argument agrees very well with both those times. Let us therefore take it as granted, that this complaint was dictated to the godly at such time as the church was oppressed, and matters were brought to the very brink of despair. For we know how cruelly the Assyrians raged: and, again, if any man durst so much as once open his lips in defence of God's religion under the tyranny of Antiochus, there was no help

but he must presently die for it. First, the prophet, in the person of the faithful, complains of the defiling of the temple and the destruction of the city; and afterwards, in the second and third verses, he complains that the saints were murdered indiscriminately, and their dead bodies cast out without honour of burial. And almost every word expresses the heinousness of the matter. For considering how God had set apart that land for his own people, it was most unreasonable that it should be abandoned to the heathen nations, that they might reproachfully trample it down, and wholly make havock of it at their pleasure. The prophet therefore finds fault as it were with the inversion of the order of nature, when he says that the heathen were come *into the heritage of God*. And the overthrowing of the temple, whereof he treats in the second place, was the less tolerable, because by that means God's service was extinguished upon earth, and his religion utterly destroyed. He adds that Jerusalem, which was God's royal seat, *was reduced to heaps*, by which saying is denoted a hideous overthrow. Now as the desecration of the temple, and the overthrow of the holy city, were not done without wicked treason to godward, so ought they of good reason to provoke God's wrath against the enemies; and therefore the prophet begins with them, and afterwards passes on to the slaughter of the godly. But an aggravated degree of cruelty is denoted by this circumstance, that they not only slew the servants of God, but also cast their corpses unburied to beasts and fowls to prey upon. Now a certain religious feeling has always possessed men's minds, that they would not defraud even their enemies of the honour of burial: whence it follows, that they are like outrageous beasts, who are gratified with the barbarity of seeing the dead torn to pieces. He shews, also, that they raged not after the ordinary manner of enemies, because they spared man's blood no more than if it had been water: whence is gathered their greediness of slaughter. And when he adds that *there was none to bury them*, it is extended to their brethren and kinsfolk; as if he should say they were stricken with such fear, and all who came in their way were butchered in such a manner, that no one dared go forth. Furthermore, as God would that in the burial of men there should remain some witness of the last resurrection; for the saints to be robbed of this right after death, was a double wrong. And here arises a question, that since God oftentimes threateneth this punishment to the reprobates, why he suffered his faithful ones to be devoured of beasts? We must bear in mind what we have said elsewhere; namely, that temporal punishments, which pertain only to the flesh, light as well

upon the elect as upon the reprobates. The difference is in the end only, because God turneth that to the welfare of the godly, which naturally was a token of his wrath. The same thing, therefore, is to be said of burial as of death. It will happen that the best servants of God are put to a violent death, which punishment we know is oftentimes executed upon murderers and other despisers of God; and yet does not the death of the saints cease to be precious in his sight: but when he hath suffered them to be wrongfully oppressed in the flesh, he sheweth, by avenging them, how dear they were to him. So, to imprint the marks of his wrath in the reprobates, even after their death, he bereaveth them of burial; and therefore he menaceth the wicked king, *that he shall be buried as an ass*: Jer. xxii. 19. But when he delivereth his own servants to the like reproach, although he be thought to have forsaken them for a time, yet afterwards he turneth it to the furtherance of their welfare, because their faith, being tried by this means, procures them a fresh reward of victory. For whereas in old time they anointed the dead, that ceremony was done but for their sakes that were alive, that when they saw the body laid up in safety, they should cherish in their hearts the hope of a better life. Wherefore it is no loss to the faithful to be deprived of burial; inasmuch as by faith they mount above these lower helps, that they may hasten to the blessed immortality.

4 *We have been, &c.*] Here is another expostulation to provoke God to mercy. For the more proudly the ungodly demean themselves against us, the nearer does the hope of deliverance shine upon us, because God will in nowise bear with their frowardness when it ranges so licentiously, especially when it shall redound to reproach his holy name: even as he says in Isaiah, xxxvii. 22, and 23; *Whom mock they? and at whom shake they their heads, O virgin daughter of Sion?* And surely their neighbours, who partly were apostates, or else degenerate sons of Abraham, and partly sworn enemies of religion, forbore not from blaspheming when they vexed the miserable people. Wherefore let us understand, that the faithful complain not here of their individual reproaches, but such as they saw indirectly levelled at God and his law, even as we shall see again in the end of the Psalm.

5 Lord, how long wilt thou be angry for ever?
shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

6 Pour out thine anger upon the heathen that

have not known thee, and upon the realms that call not upon thy name.

7 For they have devoured Jacob, and laid his dwelling waste.

8 Remember not against us the iniquities of fore-times: make haste, let thy mercies prevent us, for we are in great misery.

9 Succour us, O God of our welfare, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and be merciful to our sins, for thy name's sake.

5 *Lord, how long, &c.*] I have already told you that these two words, *how long*, and *for ever*, when they are joined together, denote a daily and long continuance of miseries, whereof also there appears no end in future: we gather, therefore, that this complaint was endited not within a month or two after the church began to be persecuted, but at such time as their hearts were half broken with weariness. Howbeit, the faithful confess here that they are not overwhelmed with so huge a heap of miseries, otherwise than by the wrath of God. For as they are persuaded that the ungodly, whatever they go about, are able to do nothing more than God permitteth them, upon this principle they easily reason that he is angry and sore displeased, seeing he giveth so great liberty to their heathen enemies. Neither could they otherwise hope to be preserved by the help of God, because it is his only work to rein them in who giveth them head. But especially it behoves us to look to God's hand as often as he striketh us with his scourges, and our own conscience convicts us. Neither charge they God with unjust displeasure, but they acknowledge themselves to be punished deservedly. Now although God shall always find just causes in his servants for chastening them, yet oftentimes, for his loving-kindness' sake, he spareth their offences, and exerciseth them with the cross to some other end, even as it was his will to try the patience of Job, and as he vouchsafed to call the martyrs to an honourable warfare. But the people here citing themselves of their own accord to God's judgment-seat, impute the calamities which they sustain to their own sins. Whence may be taken a probable conjecture, that the Psalm was made in the time of the Babylonish captivity. For under the tyranny of Antiochus they use another form of prayer, as we have seen heretofore; namely, *We have not departed from thy command-*

ments; we have not swerved from thy covenant; we have not turned aside from thee, nor fallen from thy law, and yet are all these things come upon us: Psalm xlv. 17, 18. Not that the faithful clamoured against God, but because they knew that God had another purpose than to punish sins: for through those severe encounters he prepared them for the palm of their heavenly calling.

6 *Pour out, &c.*] This wish seems not to agree with the rule of charity. For it becomes every man to be so grieved with his own miseries, as that he desire to have others relieved as well as himself. Wherefore the faithful seem to do amiss in wishing destruction to the unbelievers, for whose salvation they ought rather to have been solicitous. But that is to be remembered which I have told you heretofore, that in order that a man may make this prayer aright, he must put upon him a zeal for the general welfare, and not be goaded by any private injuries, lest he be carried against his enemies with carnal rage; but must forget himself, and only have an eye and regard to the common salvation of the church. And, secondly, that he must invoke the spirit of discretion and judgment, lest unadvised zeal move him when he prays: of which subject we have treated more at large in another place. Add to this, that the faithful here not only consult for the church, without respect of themselves, but also chiefly set their eyes upon Christ, to wish destruction to his enemies that are past recovery. Therefore they break not out rashly into this expression, that God should destroy these or those; neither do they anticipate God's judgment; but wishing to the reprobates such judgment as they deserve, they patiently wait till the heavenly judge separate the reprobates from the chosen. Thus cast they not aside the affection of charity; because, although they would fain that all were saved, yet they know that some are incurable enemies of Christ, whom certain damnation awaits. Howbeit, as yet the question is not fully answered, because in the next verse, while arraigning the cruelty of their enemies, they seem to require vengeance. But that must be remembered which I said just now, that none can pray in thiswise save such as shall have invested themselves with a general character, and laying aside all self-regard, have taken upon them a concern for the whole church; or rather, who have set before their eyes Christ the head of the church; and, finally, none but such as, under the conduct of the Spirit, have lifted up their minds to God's judgment, that, being ready to forgive, they doom to death not every manner of enemy by whom they are harmed, but only the reprobates. For as for such as make haste to punishment

before hope of amendment is departed, Christ hath condemned them of preposterous zeal in this saying, *Ye know not of what spirit ye be*: Luke, ix. 55. Moreover, the faithful do not here simply wish destruction to the wicked persecutors of the church, but, according as they have leave to commune familiarly with God, they reason thus from the absurdity of the contrary; Lord, how cometh it to pass that thou handlest us severely, over whom thy name is invoked; and bearest with the heathen nations that despise thee? Again, they intimate that God hath sufficient whereupon to execute his wrath elsewhere, as it is not they alone that have sinned in the world. Now although it becomes not us to prescribe to God what he shall do, but rather we must patiently bear his appointment, that chastisement begin at his own house; yet the faithful are permitted thus much liberty, that they may desire to be at least in no worse case than the unbelievers and despisers of God. And it is to be noted, that *not to acknowledge God*, and *not to call upon his name*, are taken for the same thing. For the prophet, in divers forms of speech, intimates that God cannot be called upon unless the knowledge of him go before; even as Paul also, Rom. x. 14, teaches. For it lies not in us to answer, *Thou art our God*, till he have prevented us by saying, *thou art my people*, Hosea, ii. 23; but he openeth our mouths while he allureth us to him. And although the calling upon God's name is not restrained to prayer alone, yet the effect is this, that except the knowledge of God direct us, we are not able to profess the true religion unfeignedly. At that time the heathen boasted on all hands that they served God: but as they were destitute of God's word, and their own forgeries and false imaginations were with them instead of God, it was abominable whatsoever they went in hand with; even as at this day in popedom, because the blind worshippers determine not what is God, nor inquire at his mouth what he approveth of, but follow worshippings of their own device, it is out of doubt that they are rejected of God, because they set up idols in his place.

8 *Remember not, &c.*] The faithful confirm what they had touched upon somewhat briefly and darkly; that is, that they are justly punished for their sins, because the relief of their miseries was to be fetched out of reconciliation. For the chief remedy of all griefs is, that God may take us into favour; because as long as he is displeased with us, even our prosperity falls out amiss and unluckily. By the sins of *foretimes* some understand the sins that were committed by our forefathers. Others think that the sins which they that pray committed when they were children or young men, are

called sins of old time. But I think it has a larger scope, as though they should acknowledge themselves not only to be guilty of a fault or two, yea and of late time committed, but also that they have been wrapped in manifold guiltiness a long time, even from of old, together with their forefathers. And so they acknowledge a long continuing stubbornness, in which they had hardened themselves against God. And this acknowledgment is answerable to the rebukings of the prophets: for the stories of the Bible bear witness that the punishment of thralldom was put off until God had found by experience that their wilfulness was incurable. Neither is it any marvel, though the children pray that the offence of their fathers may not be laid to their charge, seeing that the law avouches that God casteth the offences of the fathers into the bosoms of their children, and taketh vengeance of their sins unto the third and fourth generation. And the antithesis is to be noted between the words *make haste*, and *the sins of foretimes*. For if God had called to account whatsoever the Israelites had sinned in, for three or four hundred years before, their deliverance would have been suspended for a long time. The faithful therefore desire him to put their former offences out of mind, and to make haste to help them. Now, then, as the delay and obstacle was in their sins, not without cause do they further desire *that they may speedily meet with God's mercy*.

9 *Succour us, &c.*] Again the faithful repeat in this verse that whatsoever afflictions they endure proceed from God's displeasure, and that there is none other comfort in their adversity but to propitiate God. And as their consciences accused them of many offences, they confirm their hope of obtaining forgiveness with sundry manners of speaking. First, they seek them favour by entitling God *the God of their welfare*: secondly, they protest that they bring nothing of themselves that may challenge God's mercy, and therefore they allege nothing to him but his own glory alone. Whereby we gather that as many as have sinned are reconciled to God, not by any satisfactions or deserts of works, but by free forgiveness. Also it is to be remembered, which I have touched upon a little before, and which I have explained more largely in the sixth Psalm, that when God chastiseth us, we must not only desire release from outward adversities, but especially think how to pacify God, and not follow the example of foolish sick persons, who desire to have but the symptoms removed, and make none account of the wellspring and cause of their disease. Concerning the word *נָפַר*, which the interpreters translate, *Be merciful* or *favourable*, I have spoken heretofore: properly it signifies

to cleanse, and is applied to sacrifices. And therefore as often as we covet to obtain favour with God, let us call to mind Christ's death; *for without blood there is no remission of sins*, Heb. ix. 22.

10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? Let the revengement of the blood of thy servants which hath been shed, be made known among the heathen before our eyes.

11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thy face; according to the greatness of thine arm reserve the children of death:

12 And pay our neighbours seven-fold into their bosom even their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee.

13 And we thy people, and the sheep of thy pasture, will praise thee for ever; setting forth thy praise from generation to generation.

10 *Wherefore should, &c.*] The faithful charge God with his name now in another sense. For he beareth with us for his own name's sake; because, as he is merciful, and will have our mouths stopped that he only may be accounted righteous, he forgiveth us our sins freely. And now the faithful beseech God, that he will not make his holy name subject to the blasphemies and railings of the ungodly; whereby also we are warned that we pray amiss if we join not the care of our own welfare with the zeal of God's glory in indissoluble union. Out of the second member arises the same question which was answered just now: for although God assureth us that he will be our avenger, yet is it not therefore lawful for us to desire vengeance when we are ill treated. But we must bear in mind that this form of prayer is not dictated to every man to follow his own private passions, but to plead the common cause of the church against the reprobates, under the guiding and instruction of the Holy Ghost. Therefore that we may pray aright after this manner, first, there must shine in us the wisdom of the Spirit; secondly, the zeal which was disturbed by the contaminating affections of the flesh must be settled and purified. And then, with such a clear and calm zeal, a man may lawfully require God to shew, by evident examples before our eyes, that he setteth store by the life of his servants, whose blood he revengeth. For the faithful mean not here to be filled with blood, as though they longed greedily after it, but only

desire the confirmation of their faith by the fatherly love of God, which appears in revenging their wrongs. Furthermore, it is to be marked that they are called *the servants of God*, who notwithstanding were justly punished for their sins. For howsoever God chastiseth us, he doth not therefore forthwith cast us off, but rather testifieth thereby that he is careful of our welfare. Again, we know that when God's displeasure lighteth upon the whole body of the church, as the good and bad are mingled together, they are punished also indiscriminately; even as Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel, and the rest were involved in thralldom. For although they were not utterly faultless, yet is it certain that such great misery was not laid upon the people for their sakes, but rather in the person of them there was set forth a spectacle to the ungodly, that they might be the more grieved.

11 *Let the sighing, &c.*] Because I doubt not but the people of God were then in captivity, when the Holy Ghost endited this prayer, I think the prophet calls them all generally *prisoners*, that were enclosed within the bounds of Assyria and Chaldea, so that it had been a capital offence for them to stir one foot thence. And he terms them *children of death*, as appointed or condemned to death in respect of their captivity: although it will not be amiss to restrain this sentence to a few that were delivered up to closer keeping. And by this expression the prophet means that those fierce spirits who had lifted themselves up erewhile against God, were now brought down and effectually humbled. And he calls upon *the greatness of God's arm*, because no restitution of the church could be hoped for, without some signal miracle.

12 *And pay our, &c.*] Enough is spoken already concerning vengeance; and here the faithful shew more evidently that they are not so much moved with their own private wrongs as inflamed with godly zeal because they see God's holy name blasphemed. Which affection reigning in our minds, will easily rule the headiness of the flesh, and if spiritual wisdom be added to it, our requests will duly accord with God's just judgments. In the last verse they declare that the fruit of their deliverance shall be *that God's name may be praised*, even as we must not in anywise wish for welfare or salvation to any other end. Yea, and he giveth us all things freely, only that he may shew forth his goodness. And they promise thankfulness; not of a short continuance, but such the memorial whereof may be handed down to their posterity, and pass in continual succession through all ages as long as the world stands. The circumstance also is to be noted that he says, *we are thy people, and the sheep of*

thy pasture. For as the posterity of Abraham was chosen to magnify God's name, and that his praises might resound in Sion, what would have ensued if that people had been destroyed, but the utter decay of God's glory? And no doubt this passage corresponds with that prophecy of Isaiah, xliii. 21, *I have created this people for myself, and they shall tell forth my praise.*

PSALM LXXX.

It is a sorrowful prayer that God would succour his afflicted church. But that the faithful may the more easily obtain relief of their miseries, they compare them with their beginnings, in which God's singular grace shone bright.

[*To the chief chanter upon Sossanim Eduth. A Psalm of Asaph.*]

2 Hearken, O thou that feedest Israel, that ledest Joseph as sheep; thou that sittest between the cherubims, shew thyself.

3 Before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up thy strength, and come help us.

4 Turn us again, O God, and make thy face to shine; and we shall be safe.

Although this Psalm is allied to the last, yet to my seeming it was made in favour of the ten tribes, after the kingdom began to be defaced by sundry plagues. For it is not for nought that express mention is made of Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh. Some interpreters except, that the prophet alludes to the pitching and order of their camp, as it is described by Moses, Numbers ii. 18, 19, 20, and 21, because Manasseh and Ephraim marched together on one side. But it would be a senseless affair, passing over the tribe of Judah, yea and the holy city also, to have brought in Joseph, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Benjamin, unless he had meant to speak specially of the kingdom of Israel. If any object, that since the time that the ten tribes were rent from the house of David they were become degenerate, and the service of God was there corrupted, I answer that there dwelt many devout worshippers of God there, who had not bowed the knee before Baal, nor given over themselves to the common superstitions. And therefore Amos, vi. 6, finds fault with the hard-heartedness of the tribe of Judah, that they were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. We

know also that after that falling away there were prophets sent among them, to put them in hope of deliverance. Therefore, though they were in a manner all of them apostates, yet God neglected not the seed that was left. And as before he had given them comfort in their future miseries, by the prophecies of his grace, so now by dictating to them prayers, he confirmeth and feedeth them in the said hope, until they may find by effect that they were not deluded with vain promises. Hereby we perceive how these two last Psalms differ one from another. If any one is not satisfied with that which I have said, he is at his liberty to choose. Nevertheless, who-soever shall weigh all the circumstances, will, as I hope, willingly agree with me. I will not stand upon the words *Sosanim* and *Eduth*, because I have already, in Psalm xlv., declared what the interpreters think thereof, neither is it a thing of so great importance as to require great pains. Again, they that are most conversant with antiquities adduce nothing but conjectures of likelihood.

2 *Hearken, O thou, &c.*] Before the prophet speaks of Manasseh and Ephraim, he sets down the name of Joseph; and why rather of Joseph than of Judah, but because he purposed to treat separately of the kingdom of Israel, the government whereof was in the family and offspring of Joseph? Neither is it against reason, as I said, that seeing peculiar prophets were given them after they were stricken with God's scourge, prayer also was added that God would gather together the remnant to himself. Nevertheless, lest they might flatter themselves in their false worship, the prophet calls them back to the pure use of the law, by terming God *him that sitteth between the cherubims*. For the mercy-seat was the pledge of God's presence, where God had promised to be near at hand to his servants, to hear their prayers. That this form, appointed by God, should be altered at man's pleasure, was not lawful. The Israelites therefore are warned and enjoined to return to their first original, that they may find God favourable. Nevertheless, by this title there is expressed the wonderful love of God towards men, in that he after a sort lowereth himself to come down unto them, and to choose himself a resting-place and an abode upon earth, that he might continue among them. For he sitteth not, even as also he is not enclosed in place, whom the heavens of heavens are not able to contain. But in respect of men, he is placed between the cherubims, lest the faithful, imagining him to be far from them, might be perplexed with doubts in coming to him. Meanwhile, what I have before touched upon must be borne in mind; namely, that here is set forth a rule for the Israelites to pray aright, that they should not call upon the gods of their own making

at Dan and Bethel, but bid their superstitions farewell, and be ruled by the true light of faith, in following the word of God.

4 *Turn us again, &c.*] That is to say, Set us again in our former state. They had desired in the last verse, that God would stir up his strength before Ephraim and Manasseh; and now they complain that they are but castaways until God succour them, and remedy their miserable dispersion. Some take the words *turn again* otherwise, as if the faithful should desire the spirit of regeneration at God's hand. But because that is too curious, let us be content with the former exposition; that the faithful, being pinched with adversity, flee to God, whose property it is to restore life to those that are dead. Furthermore, as they acknowledge that the fountain of all miseries is God's hiding his face in displeasure, so again they look for complete salvation through God's favour alone. It will, say they, be a very resurrection unto us, if thy countenance shine upon us; as if they should say, that God being merciful and favourable to them, happy would they be, and all things would go well with them.

5 O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou fume at the prayers of thy people?

6 Thou hast fed us with the bread of tears; and given us plenty of tears to drink.

7 Thou hast made us a strife to our neighbours; and our enemies scoff at us among themselves.

8 Turn us again, O God of hosts, and make thy countenance to shine upon us, and we shall be safe.

5 *O Lord God, &c.*] Seeing that God of his own accord promiseth, and so often assureth us, that the petitions of his servants shall not be disappointed, it is strange that the saints should not allege before him, that he is irreconcilable, howsoever they flee to him. For they complain, not only that they are not heard, but also that God *fumeth* when he is called upon; as though he refused this duty of devotion of purpose. Where is that promise then, that was spoken of in Isaiah, lxxv. 24, *Before they cry, I will hear them?* But as God exerciseth the patience of his servants by delaying his help, the prophet, according to fleshly reason, says, *that he is deaf to our prayers*. Not that it is meet for them that pray, to stand upon this opinion; (for so would they foreclose the way against themselves;) but although

it behoves them to labour on the contrary part by the understanding of faith, and so to pierce into heaven, there to behold their hidden salvation, yet, for the better disburdening of their minds, God permitteth them to utter the cares, thoughts, griefs and fears, wherewith they are distressed. And there seems to be a covert allusion in the fume of God's wrath to the fume of the incense that was applied to the sacrifices in the time of the law. For whereas this fume of the sacrifice served to clear the air, they complain that the air was thickened with a different fume, so that their sighs came not up unto God.

6 *Thou hast fed us, &c.*] By these forms of speech they express the greatness of their grief, and also the long continuance of their miseries; as if they should say they were worn out with sorrow, even till they could no more. Afterwards they add, that *they were made a strife to their neighbours*, which may be understood two ways; either that they were at variance with their neighbours, or that their neighbours having gotten the upperhand of them were contending for the booty, as is wont, when each is eager to get the spoil to himself. Nevertheless, the former exposition seems to suit best; that they should complain that they had as many enemies as neighbours, whereas neighbourhood ought to be a bond of mutual goodwill. To the same purpose pertains the second member, that *they laugh to themselves*; that is to say, that they commune to and fro among themselves of their adversities, in way of sport and mockery. Howbeit, they ascribe this to the judgment of God, in whose power it is to bow the hearts of men; thereby to further themselves to repentance. Now, seeing we know ourselves guilty of the same fault at this day, it is no marvel though our estate should be nothing better than theirs was. Notwithstanding, as the Holy Ghost endited this form of prayer for them when they were almost past hope, we are thereby inspired with hope and boldness, lest our sins should prevent us from calling upon God. And it is not to be doubted but that what was spoken before is repeated to surmount the obstacle. For God meant not to endite a vain repetition of words for his servants: but that when they are laden with miseries, they might nevertheless rise up boldly. This support was oftentimes offered them, according as it is repeated the third time in the close of this Psalm.

9 Thou hast removed a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.

10 Thou hast cleansed the ground before it, thou

hast made it to take root, and it hath filled the land.

11 The mountains were covered with the shadow of it, and the branches thereof were as the cedars of God.

12 It stretched out his branches unto the sea, and his boughs unto the river.

13 Why then hast thou broken down the hedge of it, and all they that pass by the way have plucked it in pieces?

14 The wild boar out of the wood hath wasted it, and the wild beast of the field hath eaten it up.

9 *Thou hast removed, &c.*] By the similitude of a vine, the prophet commends God's singular graciousness vouchsafed to his people; which was of no small force to the hope of obtaining. For which of us dares rush into God's presence, until he himself prevent us? Now he allureth us as well by his benefits as by his word; and now is his bounteousness alleged to him to this end, that he should not leave the work of his hands unfinished. And although we should have but a cold sense of God's benefits, without his word, yet when experience is added to the testimony of his word, it does in no common degree encourage us. And the deliverance, whereof the prophet makes mention here, was clad with God's covenant; for God had covenanted it to Abraham four hundred years before. The effect is this, that it is now unseemly that God should suffer the vine which he had planted with his own hand, and dressed so carefully, to be pulled to pieces by wild beasts. For God's covenant was not made for two or three days, or for a small time; but he had adopted the children of Abraham, to maintain them for ever. And by the name of *vine*, the prophet gives us to understand how highly this people was esteemed in God's sight, considering that his will was, not only that they should be to him as a land of inheritance, but also to vouchsafe them a peculiar honour, even as a vine excels all other possessions. Where he says that the land or ground was cleansed, he repeats metaphorically what he had spoken before, without figure; namely, that the heathen were cast out, that there might be room for his chosen people. Unless perhaps he alludes to the continual digging wherewith vines must be cleansed, lest they should grow wild, that he may shew how God had performed the part of a good husbandman towards his people, because after

planting the vine he ceased not to labour in cherishing and preserving it. For what he immediately adds, that *it took deep root*, must not be understood of the first setting of it, but of the spreading of it abroad, which is a part of the dressing of it. Whence it follows that *the mountains were covered with the shadow of it*, because all the country, though it was hilly, was replenished with inhabitants; so great a multitude did that people grow to. And therefore he compares the branches of it to the cedars of God, that is to say, to the goodliest and most excellent cedars that could be, that the blessing of God might be made more manifest. We know that the sea and the Euphrates were the bounds of the promised inheritance appointed by God.

13 *Why then hast thou, &c.*] It is an application of the similitude, because nothing is less seemly than that God should abandon the vine that he had planted to be rooted up by wild beasts. That he would do so he threateneth and forewarneth them oftentimes by the prophets, but to this end, that the people's unthankfulness should be made more detestable, which forced that monstrous kind of punishment. In the mean time, not without cause are the faithful enjoined to conceive confidence from God's so excellent bounteousness; at least that even in the very plucking up they might hope that God would have a care of them, who never forsaketh the work of his hands. For although the people were brought to destruction through the fault of their own incurable stubbornness, yet God restored his vine afterwards again, a few sprigs having been reserved. This deprecation was indeed set forth for the whole people, thereby to prevent their horrible destruction. But because few or none made suit to God with a truly humble heart to quench his anger, it was enough that those few were delivered from destruction, that a new vine might spring from them again. Moreover, by these contrasted terms the unseemliness of the matter is increased, when God is set on the one side as the vine-keeper, and on the other part not only all that pass by, but even the wild boars, and other beasts of the woods. Some take the word כרסם for *to stuff the belly*, which signification would suit well with this present place, but that it is somewhat obsolete.

15 Turn again, I beseech thee, O God of hosts, look down from heaven, and see and visit this vine.

16 And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch which thou hast made strong for thyself.

17 It is burnt up with fire; it is cut up: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.

18 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man, whom thou hast made strong for thyself.

19 And we will not go back from thee: thou shalt quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.

20 Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, make thy face to shine, and we shall be safe.

15 *Turn again, I beseech thee, &c.*] By these words the prophet means that although God hide his face for a time, or rather shew as if he were alienated, yet must we not in anywise yield to temptation, because, whom he seemed to reject he taketh again into favour, and is well pleased with them, provided he be sought with assured hope of forgiveness. Now although it was a high privilege for the people to be accounted God's vineyard, yet while the faithful seek God's favour in respect thereof, they bring nothing of their own, but only desire of him that he fail them not in the mid race of his bounteousness. I doubt not but the part *from heaven* was put in that the faithful should not doubt to extend their faith afar, although God, from whom they had departed, were far from them; and furthermore, that if there appeared no hope of deliverance upon earth they should look up to heaven. As touching the word כנה, I willingly admit the sense in which some translate it; namely, *a place prepared*. However, as some think there is a change of the letter נ into כ, so that it should signify *a garden* or *vineyard*, let the choice continue free. This is certain, that it is a metaphor like the former, whereby the singular bounteousness of God in garnishing his people is denoted. Also he terms the vine-branch that was set by God's hand, *the man of his right hand*.

17 *It is burnt up, &c.*] Now he expresses more plainly the miseries of the people. He had said that God's vine was exposed to beasts to be torn in pieces. But much more hard is it to be consumed with fire, rooted up, and to perish. Now though the Israelites had treacherously fallen away from godliness, yet were they still a portion of the church, as has been said. Wherefore, by this melancholy example of theirs, we are admonished what sore punishments our unthankfulness deserves, especially when it is joined by wilfulness, so that God can do no good with us by his threatening and rebuking. And herewith let us

learn, even in the midst of the flaming of God's wrath, when it burns hottest, to cast our sorrows into his bosom, who by wondrous means raiseth up his church from destruction. He surely for his part were ready, not only to hold on his favour towards us in uninterrupted succession, but also to enrich us more and more if our wickedness hindered him not. But because it is not possible but he must be displeased at so many offences, it is a mark of inestimable mercy, when the fire which we ourselves have kindled has spread far and wide, even then to quench the same, and to reserve some part of the church safe, or, that I may speak more properly, to raise up a people even out of the very ashes, to call upon his name. Again; the prophet repeats that the church perished, not by the violence and sword of enemies, but by the rebuke of God's countenance. For never is there any assuagement of plagues to be hoped for, unless we are fully persuaded that they are justly laid upon us by God's hand. And it was a sign of amendment, that they had an eye to the hand that struck them, as it is said elsewhere, Is. ix. 12.

18 *Let thy hand be, &c.*] The prayer which he had used under the figure of the vineyard he repeats in plain words, namely, that God should with his hand *defend the man of his right hand, and the man whom he hath made strong for himself*. Nevertheless, it is uncertain whether he speaks of the king alone, or of the whole people. For although Jeroboam was anointed king, yet came he not by that honour lawfully, neither did God so approve of any of his successors, but that always the right and power of dominion continued with the posterity of David. For, as we have seen in Ps. lxxviii. 67, God chose not the tribe of Ephraim, but rather by his unchangeable decree the sceptre was given to the house of Judah, according as Jacob's prophecy imports, Gen. xlix. 10. Therefore it was an impious rending when the greater part of the people fell away to Jeroboam. Nevertheless this knot may be untied, because although the beginning of the kingdom was untoward, as is said in Hosea xiii. 11, *I gave you a king in my displeasure*, yet was it afterwards confirmed by sufferance, and the anointing witnessed that the thing was ratified by God which had been done amiss in an uproar of the people. The people of Israel therefore might well say that their king was created and established by God, who had added him to the children of David for a remedy of the disseverance. For though through that dissevering the state was dissolved, yet was that pillar put under it by the secret providence of God, that it should not fall down. But I willingly comprehend

the whole body of the church. Neither was it unadvisedly that the prophet used the singular number, seeing it was God's will that that people should be but as one man. In which respect also Paul, Gal. iii. 16, lays an emphasis on one seed. For Ishmael, Esau, and others were dissipated when God rescued and gathered together the seed of Abraham. And so by *the son of man* will be meant the people which God had adopted to himself, that they might be as one man. Still, as this oneness depended upon a head, I object not that the king should be purposely denoted, inasmuch as he held back the most part of the people from perishing utterly. But here again the prophet rests only upon God's former benefits in seeking his favour; as if he should say, Lord, forasmuch as it is thy property to make an end of that which thou hast begun, preserve the king whom thou hast given us. In the end the faithful promise to be thankful to God if he will hear them; and that not only with the sacrifice of praise but also with their whole life. For *the calling upon God's name* is taken for *the calves of the lips*. But he declares the agreement of the whole life when he says, *we will not go back from thee*. Nevertheless, the verse may be constructed thus; Lord, even in the uttermost point of our extremity we will abide under thy obedience, neither shall the sharpness of adversity force us to fall from thee: and when we are restored by thy grace and power, we will magnify thy name. To speak any more of the last verse, which the prophet harps upon now the third time, would be superfluous.

PSALM LXXXI.

This Psalm consists of two parts. For whosoever was the author of it, he exhorts the people, that seeing they are delivered by the hand of God, and chosen to be a royal priesthood, and peculiar church, they should, in remembrance of this inestimable grace, faithfully worship their deliverer, as well with praises as with holy life. Afterwards follows, in the person of God, an upbraiding of their unkindness, namely, that whereas he allureth the people gently and courteously unto him, he could nought prevail with them, but they wilfully refused the yoke of his law.

[To the chief chanter upon Gittith, Asaph's.]

2 Sing ye joyfully unto God our strength : sing loud to the God of Jacob.

3 Take the song, and bring forth the tabret, the merry harp with the viol.

4 Strike up the harp in the new moon; in the time appointed at the day of our sacrifice.

5 For it is a statute for Israel, a law to the God of Jacob.

6 He set it for a witness in Joseph, when he went out upon the land of Egypt: I heard a language that I understood not.

7 I have removed his shoulder from the burden; and his hands are gone away from the pots.

8 Thou criedst out in tribulation, and I delivered thee: I answered thee in the secret of thunder; I proved thee upon the waters of Meribah. Selah.

2 *Sing ye joyfully, &c.*] It is likely that this Psalm was appointed for the festival days, on which the Jews kept their solemn assemblies. For in the opening, he shews that it was no order appointed by God that they should stand deaf and dumb at the tabernacle, (for God is not worshipped either with idleness or with cold or empty ceremonies,) but that by such exercises they should cherish the unity of faith among themselves, and shew forth their devotion, and encourage themselves to continual progress in the same, and join their endeavours together in praising God; and finally, that they might be held still in the holy covenant, whereby God had adopted them to himself. Now seeing that the use of holidays under the law was such, one may gather also, that as often as the faithful assemble at this day, they ought to purpose this end; namely, to exercise themselves in true devotion, to call God's benefits to remembrance, to profit in his word, and to testify the consent of their faith. For men do but mock God with trifling and unprofitable ceremonies, except the doctrine of faith chiefly flourish, to move them to call upon God; and unless the recollection of God's benefits minister matter of praise. Nay rather, it is a mere dishonouring of God's name, when the people quench the light of doctrine, and skim over the outward service. And therefore the prophet not only bids the people come together to the tabernacle, but also instructs them to what end, that the remembrance of the free covenant may be there renewed, whereby their faith and devotion may increase, that God's benefits may be magnified, and thereby men's minds moved to giving of thanks. As for the tabret, harp, and viol, we have said heretofore, and must say again here-

after, that the Levites, not without cause, used instruments of music under the old law, because it was God's will to train his people, which as yet were tender and childlike, with such rudiments, until the coming of Christ. But now, when the brightness of the Gospel, having chased away the shadows of the law, commends to us the service of God in a simpler form, we should do but foolishly and wickedly, to counterfeit that which the prophet appointed only for his own time. Whereby it appears that the papists were apes in transferring this to themselves. Under the *new moon*, he comprehends also the other high feasts by the figure synecdoche. And although sacrifices were offered daily, yet he terms those *the days of sacrifice*, by way of pre-eminence, in which the faithful presented themselves at the tabernacle by the appointment of the law.

5 *For it is a statute, &c.*] That his exhortation may be the more effectual, he tells God's people that it is laid upon them as a law, whereby the everlasting league is ratified. Now as in leagues there is mutual covenanting on either part, he says it was a statute given to Israel, and that God covenanted this privilege for himself. Some derive the word עֲרֹת from עָרָה, which signifies *to deck* or *garnish*, and translate it *the decking* or *garnishment* of Joseph. But rather it comes from the word עָרַךְ, and the text requires that it should be translated for *a witness* or *covenant*. Furthermore, in the name of Joseph, the prophet had an eye to their first original, though after the death of Jacob they were distinguished into two houses. For as the sovereignty was not yet come to Judah, and Reuben was fallen from his right of primogeniture, there was good reason why Joseph's posterity should have the pre-eminence, in remembrance of his benefit, because he had been the father and fosterer of his brethren, and of the whole stock of them. Nevertheless, the prophet commends the holiness of the covenant by a special mark, because God had purchased that people to himself, when he challenged this honour to be yielded unto him; as if he should say that the people were delivered upon this condition, that they should resort together upon the days appointed, to renew the remembrance of this benefit. This saying, *when he went out*, agrees as well with God as the people. For it is an ordinary manner of speech, to say that God goeth out before his people, as the shepherd goes before his sheep, or the captain before his host. The preposition *upon*, seems to some to denote the higher situation of Judah, because they mount upward that come thither out of Egypt. But I take it more simply, that the people, having God to go before them, roamed unrestrainedly through the

land of Egypt, because the inhabitants, discouraged and dismayed, durst not stop their passage. And he enlarges the benefit of their deliverance, saying, in the person of the whole people, that he was rescued out of deep barbarism. For nothing is more grievous than to be a *sojourner* among a people with whom we can have no communication by speech, which is the chief bond of society. For as the tongue is as it were the express image and glass of the mind, they that want the intercourse of language are no less strangers one to another than the wild beasts of the forest. And Isaiah, xxxiii. 19, when he meant to threaten a most sore punishment, told them that enemies should come upon them of deep lips, and stammering throat. Therefore the people acknowledged God's benefit to be so much the more excellent, in that they were delivered from the Egyptians, whose language they understood not.

7 *I have removed, &c.*] Here, now, God declareth with what and how great benefits he had made the people of Israel beholden unto him. For the more grievous the thralldom was from which they were delivered, the more desirable and precious was their liberty. Therefore when the prophet reports that they were made to stoop under the burden, and put to brick-making, and other slavish and hard works, by comparing the contrary estates he doth the more set forth the benefit of their deliverance. Now a mystical allusion from them to us must be observed. For seeing that God hath not only withdrawn our shoulders from the burden of brick, nor only removed our hands from the kilns, but also ransomed us out of the most miserable tyranny of Satan, and led us out of hell, much more are we bound and beholden unto him than were the people in old time. The same meaning pursues he in the next verse: God, says he, rescued them when they cried to him in their distress; which I willingly understand of their prayers. For although it fall out now and then, that such as are brought to the point of extremity, bewail their misfortunes with confused howling, yet, as in the chosen people there remained as yet some sparks of godliness, and the promise that was made to the fathers was not quite slipped out of their minds, I doubt not but their prayers were turned unto God. For even they that purpose no such thing, yet if any great necessity constrain them, they are moved to godward by the secret instinct of nature. So much the more likely is it, therefore, that the promise was as it were a schoolmaster to them, to make them have an eye unto God. And forasmuch as no man calls upon God heartily, but he that hopes for help at his hand, this crying of the Israelites ought the better to

convince them, to ascribe to God alone the deliverance that was offered them. Some expound *the secret of thunder* too curiously in my judgment; namely, that God by thundering hid the groanings of his people from the Egyptians, that they might not more exasperate the Egyptians. But I take it simply, that the people were heard after a secret and wonderful manner, and yet that signs were shewn openly, whereby the Israelites might perceive that they were helped by the hand of God. Although, then, God appeared not face to face, yet was the thunder a notable assurance of his secret presence among them. Now that the Israelites may set the more store by this benefit, God upbraideth them covertly, that it was bestowed upon them unworthily, because they had given a taste of their malicious and froward nature at the waters of Meribah: Num. xiv. 3, 4. As if he should say, Seeing that your wickedness betrayed itself openly at that time, surely I had no respect of your worthiness. And this rebuke agrees no less with us, than the Israelites, because God not only hearkened to our sighs when we were afflicted under Satan's tyranny, but also determined that his only-begotten Son should be the price of our redemption, before we were born. And afterwards, when we were his enemies, he hath called us to the partaking of his grace, by enlightening us with his Gospel and his Spirit, and yet we cease not to repine at him now and then, or rather, fiercely to rebel against him.

9 Hear, O my people, and I will protest unto thee : if thou wilt hear me, O Israel.

10 Let there be no strange god in thee ; neither worship thou any strange god.

11 I am the Lord, the God that have brought thee out of the land of Egypt : open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.

12 But my people hearkened not to my voice, and Israel refused me.

13 And I gave them up to the thoughts of their own heart ; they shall walk in their own devices.

9 *Hear, O my people, &c.*] That the prophet may the better move their minds, he invests God with the character of a teacher, and brings him in speaking familiarly in the midst of the congregation, that the people may perceive that all assemblies are unprofitable and trifling where the voice of God soundeth not in exhorting to faith and godliness. But it is good to weigh the words. This preface

shews briefly, that the holidays are not kept purely and rightly except the faithful be attentive to God's voice, because if they mind to consecrate their hands, feet, eyes, yea and themselves whole unto the obedience of God, they must of necessity begin with their ears. And so he shews that he acknowledgeth none for his servants but such as are learners. By the word *protest*, he means that he covenanteth after a solemn manner, that his words may have the more authority. This which follows, (that is to say, *If thou wilt hear me, O Israel*,) I think is put abruptly, as is wont in pathetic speeches, where the want of something expresses a greater earnestness. Others annex it to the verse following, thus: *Israel, if thou wilt hear me, there shall be no strange god in thee*. But I take it to be the speech of one that regrets. Howbeit, God giveth an inkling indirectly, that he distrusteth his stubborn people, and scarce hopeth that they will be obedient and teachable. Afterwards he propounds the chief article of the covenant, and wellnigh the whole sum of it; namely, that he alone should be above all. Now, if any man like better to resolve it thus: *Israel, if thou wilt hear me, there is nothing that I so much require or exact at thy hand, as that thou shouldst content thyself with me alone, and not seek for thyself any strange gods; I disallow not this sense*. Truly, by this saying God confirmeth what he inculcateth so often elsewhere in the law and the prophets; namely, that he is a jealous God, so that he can abide no partner in his honour. But by the way, he admonisheth therewith, that the ground of true worshipping begins with obedience. Moses observes another kind of order, *Exod. xx. 2, 4*, and *Deut. v. 6, 8*. For after God hath first told them that he is the God of Israel, then he forbiddeth them to make themselves any new gods. But here the prohibition is placed first, and afterwards is added the cause; namely, that the people ought to hold themselves satisfied abundantly with the God that had purchased them to himself. Perchance also he set this in the forefront instead of a preparative, to withdraw the people from superstitions, which must of necessity be first plucked up and weeded away, ere true godliness and religion can take root.

11 *Open thy mouth wide, &c.*] Like as erewhile by mentioning the deliverance of the people, God did cast a bridle upon his servants, thereby to hold them bound under his obedience, so now he assureth them that he hath abundance of all good things for the time to come, wherewith to satisfy the longing of the people. And here are to be noted the three reasons wherewith God holdeth the Israelites to him-

self alone, and sheweth them that they do wickedly and impiously if they turn aside to any strange gods. For by the word *Jehovah*, which, following the general consent of all former translations, I have also translated *Lord*, he avoucheth himself to be God by nature, and denieth that it lies in man's choice to forge new gods; and the pronoun *I* is emphatic. For although the Egyptians pretended to worship God the creator of heaven and earth, yet did their despising of the God of Israel plainly convict them of lying. For as soon as men depart from him, they do but deck their own devices with his spoils, what colours soever they set upon their doings. After he hath affirmed himself to be the Lord, he avoucheth his godhead by effect and experiment, as he gave a manifest proof of it in the delivering of his people, especially because in so doing he performed his promise made to their forefathers. For the power which was seen at that time, ought not to have been considered apart by itself, because it depended upon the covenant made long before with Abraham, by the same God that had purchased himself praise, no less by the proof of his veracity than by his mighty power. The third time he now again offereth himself for the time to come; under this condition, that if Israel proceed in faith, he will continue the same towards their children, as their fathers had found him heretofore, because his bounteousness cannot be exhausted. For by the *opening wide* he tacitly marketh their narrowness, which dams up the way against his bounteousness; as if he should say that the blame of the people's penury is in themselves, because they are not of sufficiency to receive the good things that they have need of; or rather, because through the impediment of their unbelief, they wilfully keep off and drive away the benefits that would come flowing to them spontaneously. Neither doth he only bid them open their mouth, but he more highly commendeth the abundance of his grace, in avouching that how far and wide soever our desires stretch themselves, there shall want nothing that may satisfy us to the full. Whence it follows, that he droppeth down his heavenly benefits upon us sparingly and slenderly, because our mouth is too narrow; and that others are let alone fasting and empty, because they shut their mouth close. For the greater part, either from squeamishness, or pride, or madness, refuse whatsoever good thing is offered them from heaven. Others, although they do not utterly refuse it, yet do they scarcely take in a few small drops, because their faith is so straitened, that it hinders the pouring in of abundance. And hereby is the wickedness of the world very openly discovered, in that they cannot abide either to embrace God, or to settle themselves

in him, when they know him. For although God require here to be worshipped with the outward sign of honour, yet doth he not care for the bare name, (for his majesty consists not in two or three syllables,) but rather looketh upon the substance itself, that our hope be not ranging and roving elsewhere, or that the praise of righteousness, salvation, and all good things, be not transferred unto any other. For he challengeth the godhead to himself in this respect, because he hath plentiful abundance of all good things to satisfy and fill us withal.

12 *But my people, &c.*] Now God complaineth that whereas he allureth the Israelites gently unto him, yet is this gentle calling of his despised; or rather, whereas he began long ago to exhort them, they always stopped their ears against his word. For it is not one day's stubbornness that he findeth fault with, but he meaneth that his people were always dull, and stubborn, even from the beginning, and that they go on still in the same wilfulness. In good truth it is monstrous wilfulness, to shut out God from entrance and to deny him hearing, when he is ready to covenant with us in a manner on even terms. And lest they might extenuate their fault by pretence of ignorance, he addeth that he was rejected with avowed and premeditated contempt: whereby it appears that their minds were bewitched by the devil. Hereupon he avoucheth how it came to pass that he gave them over in their hard-heartedness, or, as others translate it, in their own imagination. For שָׁרַר, wherefrom this word is derived, signifies properly *a navel*. From whence there is an apt metaphor to the thoughts that are wrapped up in people's hearts, or also to the hardness that possesses the midst of the heart. As however we know that in the Psalms one thing is wont to be repeated twice, I have preferred the word *thought*, because there follows immediately, *they shall walk in their own devices*. Nevertheless, by these words he testifieth that he punished his people justly, when he bereft them of sound doctrine, and gave them up to a reprobate mind. For as by ruling us with his word, he reineth us in as it were with a bridle, that we should not go astray after errors, so in taking away his prophets from the Jews, he gave head to their froward devices, that they might lead themselves forth into error. And surely it is the most grievous kind of vengeance that can be, and a token of horrible desperation, when God, holding his peace, and winking at our frowardness, ministereth not the medicine of correction. For so long as he findeth fault with us, and scareth us with fear of judgment by citing us to his judgment-seat, he therewith allureth us also to repentance. But when he

seeth it is but lost labour to chide us any more, and that his warnings can nought avail, then, by holding his peace, he sheweth that he hath given up all thought of our salvation. Nothing therefore is to be more dreaded than for men to be so emancipated from God that they may run riot after their own devices, and be healed by Satan where he list. Nevertheless, this may be extended more largely, that God being worn out with weariness, cared no more for the holding back of his people, who, by their desperate wilfulness, had cut themselves off from all hope of amendment. Fondly do some infer from this passage that God's grace is bestowed equally upon all men, until it be rejected. For even then did God, setting aside the whole world, vouchsafe to call the offspring of Abraham alone to him by singular privilege. At this day, I confess, the difference is taken away, so that the message of the Gospel, whereby God reconcileth the world to himself, is common to all men. Yet we see how God stirreth up godly teachers in certain places. Nevertheless the outward preaching alone would not suffice, unless he should effectually draw those to him whom he hath called. But as this place teaches that there is no plague more deadly than for men to be guided by their own counsels, we have no more to do but to take our leave of fleshly wisdom, and to follow the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

14 O that my people had hearkened to me, *and* that Israel had walked in my ways!

15 I would soon have brought their enemies low, and turned mine hand against their adversaries.

16 The haters of the Lord should have fawned upon them, and their time should have been for ever.

17 And I would have fed them with the fat of corn: and I would have sufficed thee with honey out of the rock.

14 *O that my people, &c.*] Again, by an honourable title he more effectually exposeth the shame and reproach of the people. For their offence was double, inasmuch as they, being God's people by vocation, differed nothing from such as were furthest from him; even as in Isaiah, i. 3, he complaineth: *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but my people hath none understanding.* As the word *י* is not conditional, but expressive of a wish, I doubt not but God, after the manner of one that sighs,

crieth out that this people are wretched, who have wilfully refused to have their welfare well provided for. For taking upon him the person of a father, when, after trying all remedies, he seeth his children past recovery, he casteth out words of grief, as it were with sighing and groaning. Not that he is subject to passions as men are, but because he cannot otherwise express his love towards us. And the prophet seems to have borrowed this passage out of the song of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 29, where he bewails the stubbornness of the people nearly in the same words. And there is here a covert upbraiding, that the Jews may know that their own wilfulness was the only hindrance that the world went not well with them. If any object that God complaineth in vain and without cause, considering that it is in his hand to bow the stiff necks of the people, and that now, seeing he listed not to do it, there is no reason why he should compare himself to a sorrowful person; I answer, it is rightly done for our sakes, lest we might seek for the blame of our unhappiness elsewhere than in ourselves. But here we must beware that we mingle not divers matters together, yea, and such as are as far distant as heaven and earth. For God in coming down to us by his word, and calling all men without exception, disappointeth no man. For as many as come unto him are admitted, and thereby feel that they were not called for nought. Meanwhile, from the fountain of secret election flows this difference, that the word enters into the hearts of some, and does only touch the ears of others. And yet is it not against reason that he should complain piteously of our folly, when we obey not. For as in calling us by the outward word, he sheweth himself a father, so also why should he not represent the image of a father in this form of complaint? For rightly doth he avouch in Ezekiel, xviii. 32, *that he willeth not the death of a sinner*, provided the interpretation of the saying be fetched sincerely and without contention from the whole context. He willeth not the death of a sinner? How? because he would have them all turned unto him. But certain it is that this turning is not in men's freewill, until God have made their stony hearts fleshy; nay rather, this renewing, as Austin shrewdly teaches, is of more excellence than creation itself. And what hinders that God boweth not nor frameth all men's hearts alike to his obedience? Here therefore must modesty and sobriety be observed, that we attempt not to intrude into his secret decrees, but that his will may suffice us, which he hath disclosed in his word. For rightly is he deemed to will the salvation of them, to whom this saying is directed, Isaiah xxi. 12; *Come unto me,*

and turn again. In the second member the prophet defines what it is to hear God. For it were not enough to assent to God when he speaketh, for hypocrites easily grant that whatsoever proceedeth out of God's mouth is true, just as if an ass should wag his ears. But this prophet gives us to understand that God is not heard unless we submit ourselves to his obedience.

15 *I would soon, &c.*] Here he admonisheth the Israelites that whatsoever plagues they suffered, they were to be imputed to their own sins, because their enemies fought not against them with any other strength than such as they were furnished with from heaven. God had promised that his elect people should, by his guiding, get the upperhand of all enemies; and now, lest any man might charge him with breach of promise, he affirmeth that he would have done so, if he had not been hindered by the sins of his people. And no doubt he tacitly remindeth them of their former victories, which they had obtained, not by their own strength, but by his guiding. Now he saith he is not only restrained by their fault, so that he is fain to forbear defending them, but also compelled by their wickedness to leave their enemies, and to fall upon them with armed hand. The same sentence pursueth he when he saith that their enemies should have come under their yoke as suppliants, had not the wickedness of the Israelites, by shaking off God's yoke through their own wantonness, given them courage to do what they pleased. In calling them the enemies of the Lord, he taunteth the Israelites, because by breaking the bond of the covenant they separated themselves from God so that he could not forthwith undertake war for them against those that were enemies both to him and them. For as worldly princes, if they are disappointed by their allies, come to composition with the rest of their enemies, and so revenge themselves on the perjured covenant-breakers, even so God intimateth to the Israelites that he had spared his enemies and theirs, because they had falsely and traitorously beguiled him; for why suffereth he his open enemies unpunished, and ceaseth for a time from maintaining his own glory, but because he setteth them against his own rebellious and disobedient people to subdue them? What is meant by the word כָּהֵן, we have said heretofore. The prophet gives an inkling that there is peace to be hoped for with the reprobates no otherwise than so far as God restraineth their rage by secret chains, like as a lion shut up in an iron cage is a lion still, and yet is restrained from tearing and plucking in pieces even those that are not more than five or six feet from him. Even so although the wicked gape after our destruction,

they are not able to execute what their hearts could serve them to do; but rather God tameth their fierceness, so that they counterfeit a kind of meekness. The effect is, that it happens through the fault of the Israelites themselves that their enemies prevail against them, and bear themselves so frowardly, whereas they would have been but suppliants to them if they had continued the humble and obedient children of God. Also the everlastingness of the time must be referred to the promises, as must also the store of wheat and honey, even to the full. For God had avowed that he would be their protector and keeper unto the end. The change therefore that had happened so suddenly, is reproachfully objected to them in that they had so soon wilfully cast away their happy state. The same also is to be said of the fruitfulness of the land. For how falls it out that they suffer hunger in the land in which God had promised them abundance of wheat and honey; but because the blessing of God has withered away by their fault? By *the fat of corn* he metaphorically means the flower of it, unless any one like rather to take it for the finest and purest wheat. Some think that *honey out of the rock* is spoken of hyperbolically; as though it had been said, honey should have flowed out of the rocks, rather than God would not have satisfied this people. But as it appears by the sacred story that honey was found everywhere in the seams and rifts of rocks as long as God's blessing flourished, the natural sense is that God's grace should have held on with continual and uniform course, if it had not been interrupted by the wickedness and atrocities of the people.

PSALM LXXXII.

Because kings, and such as are endued with authority, being blinded with pride, do for the most part give themselves liberty to do what they list, he warns them that they must render an account before the Supreme Judge, who surpasseth all the loftiness of the world. And after he has put them in mind of their duty and estate, perceiving that he sings to the deaf, he calls upon God for vengeance.

[*A Psalm of Asaph.*]

1 God sitteth in the congregation of God: in the midst of the gods shall he judge.

2 How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked?

3 Do right to the poor and fatherless : do justice to the helpless and needy.

4 Deliver the poor and oppressed : deliver them out of the hand of the ungodly.

1 *God sitteth in the congregation of God, &c.*] Surely this is a very unseemly thing, that whereas God's will is, that certain men should have pre-eminence over mankind for the common good, they acknowledge not to what end they have superiority, nor yet by whose blessing they are placed in so high a degree, but despising all equity, lord it after their own lust. For their eyes are dazzled with their own glistening, so that they think the whole world to be born for them. Besides this, they think it stands not with their high estate to be ruled by moderate counsels. And when now they exceed all bounds in the madness of their folly, they however seek for flatterers to sooth and applaud their vices. To correct this pride, first the prophet says that men are not so installed in their thrones and judgment-seats but that God holdeth still the sovereignty; according also as God would have the same avouched by the mouth of a heathen and unchaste poet, who says, "dreaded tyrants rule over their own peculiar flocks, but even those tyrants themselves are ruled by Jove, renowned for his triumph over the giants, and who governs all things by his nod." Therefore, lest the great men of the world should take more upon them than is meet, the prophet here sets up a throne for God, whence to judge them all, and bring them in order, which is very needful. For although they confess that they reign by the grace of God, and worship him with ceremonies, yet their own greatness infatuates them, so that in their false imagination they drive him far from their company, for they cannot abide to be subject to reason and laws. This madness, wherewith the princes of the world are bewitched, it was the prophet's purpose to deride, because they leave God no place in their company. And that he may the better reprove the delirious overweening wherein worldly princes besot themselves, he terms civil order *the congregation of God*, because howsoever his glory shine forth in each several part of the world, yet it sends forth an especial light in this, namely, when lawful government flourishes among men. Indeed I confess it is an ordinary thing among the Hebrews to garnish everything rare and singular with the addition of *God*. But here it seems that, according to the circumstance of the place, the prophet calls the state of princes by the name of *gods*, as that in which a peculiar majesty of God

shines forth; even as Solomon, Prov. ii. 17, calls wedlock *God's covenant*, because it excels in a certain singular holiness. In the second member it makes small difference as to effect, whether we read it *in the midst of the gods*, or *shall judge the gods in the midst*, saving that the first construction runs best; that however much the heads of the world exalt themselves, yet can they not diminish God's authority, that he should the less retain his sovereignty, and maintain his right to govern. But in this place, as also a little after, and in other places, the name of *gods* is taken for *judges*, in whom God hath imprinted a special mark of his glory: for to apply it to the angels is an overstrained device.

2 *How long will ye, &c.*] Many suppose that here is described the manner of judgment. But it seems to me rather that the prophet, to smooth the way for a rebuke, has spoken thus in way of preface. Although kings lift their heads above the clouds, yet even they also live under this law, that they should be ruled by God's hand; and therefore it is but fondness for them to make fierce struggling to exempt themselves from reason. For though they are the basest of tyrants, and possess that place by rank treason, yet if any servant of God dare but once open his lips against them, forthwith they pretend the holy name of God, as though they had great wrong done unto them. And so while they surmise themselves to be exempted and privileged from the common law of mankind, they banish God's doctrine and the ministers thereof to the people. Finally, they think there is no sovereignty but where unbridled lust expatiates at liberty. But this principle being once established, *that God governeth among them*, there is now some approach opened for doctrine. The prophet then, after he has laid a foundation for his authority, inveighs freely against princes, and reproves that most gross vice of theirs when they prostitute themselves to the oppressive troublers of the poor, and for hire of reward pervert all equity. And he expresses the *wicked* by name; for good men will never go about to corrupt judges. Moreover, a certain devilish phrensy infatuates the great men of the world, so that they voluntarily pay greater deference to wicked men than to the simple and innocent. Let us admit that the wicked sit still, and seek not to win themselves favour, neither by flattery nor by fraud, nor by bribery, nor by any other sleights, yet notwithstanding, even they themselves that bear rule are most commonly inclined to the bad side. And the reason why the prophet upbraids them is this, that wicked men find more favour at their hands than good and honest men.

3 *Do right to, &c.*] The prophet briefly warns us by

what trial a man may discern a just and upright government; namely, if they give to the miserable and oppressed their right. There is in the words the figure synecdoche, for it is certain that they are bound to do right to all men. Nevertheless the prophet, not without reason, says that they are appointed to be defenders of such as are in misery or oppressed, because such both stand in need of others' help, and shall not find it elsewhere than where covetousness, ambition, and other corruptions are not. Therefore judges bear the sword to restrain the wicked, lest violence might prevail in the outrageous disorders of the world, and lest, as every man is strong, he should become the bolder to oppress the weak. Seldom therefore do rich men resort to the magistrates for help, except it be when they happen to fall out among themselves. Now we perceive wherefore the prophet commends chiefly the poor and needy; namely, because such as are in danger of the cruelty and wrongs of rich men have no less need of the defence of magistrates than the sick have of physicians. Were kings and other judges once thoroughly persuaded of this point, that they are appointed to be as guardians of the poor, to set themselves between them and wrong, and to suppress all unrighteous force, perfect uprightness would flourish everywhere. For whosoever can find in his heart to defend the poor, he will not be bowed hither and thither by favour, but he will have an eye only to the thing that is right. This also we gather from the prophet's words, that though no man seek to the magistrates for help, yet are the magistrates condemned of negligence before God if they succour not unrequested. For when manifest wickedness reigns, and sighs and lamentations sound everywhere, they falsely set up this pretence, that they cannot redress wrongs unless they are complained to. Inasmuch therefore as oppression cries out sufficiently of itself, if the judge sitting on the high watchtower wink at it, the prophet tells him plainly that he shall not escape unpunished with his dissimulation.

5 They neither know, nor understand; they walk in darkness, though all the foundations of the earth be moved.

6 I have said, Ye are gods; and children of the Most High, all of you:

7 But ye shall die as a man, and ye princes shall fall as one of the common sort.

8 Arise, O God, and judge the earth, for thou shalt inherit in all nations.

5 *They neither know, &c.*] After he has put princes in mind of their duty, he complains that it profits not, because they are besotted, and will not admit sound doctrine: yea though the whole world should be shaken in pieces, they abide careless in their own sluggishness. For hence does he most reprove and assail their madness; that although they see heaven and earth confounded, yet are they not at all moved: as though they cared not which way the world went, when notwithstanding they are especially chosen and appointed for the preservation thereof. I have declared a little before, what it is that most bereaves them of understanding; namely, because they are dazzled with their own splendour; and as they fearlessly shake off every yoke, no fear of God will bend them to moderation. For the beginning of sound knowledge and wisdom, is to yield God his due honour, that he may hold us in with the bridle of his word. This last member, *though the foundations of the earth be moved*, is, by almost all, otherwise applied; as if the prophet should say, that of all the mischiefs in the world, the greatest is when princes execute not their duty; because the state of the earth, that is to say, the state of men, stands upon this foundation; namely, that justice should flourish. Therefore according to them the meaning is, that the world is weakened by the unjust tyranny of princes. Although I disallow not this meaning, yet think I rather, as I have already said, that here is condemned the monstrous dulness of judges, who are not moved at the horrible confusion of things, no nor at the very shaking of the earth.

6 *I said, &c.*] It is a concession, whereby however the prophet shews that there shall be no defence for wicked judges it the sacred characters with which God hath invested them. And although he bring them not in speaking, yet this exception is of as much force as if he had said, If you hold out your dignity as a buckler, this boasting of yours shall nought avail you, but rather you beguile yourselves with foolish confidence; for God hath not bereft himself of his own sovereignty, in making you his deputies. Again he would have you mindful of your own infirmities: that you may carefully, and in the fear of God, execute the charge enjoined you. It may also be taken in God's own person; that together with their authority he bestowed his name also upon them: and it seems to agree with Christ's saying, that they are called gods, to whom the word of God was spoken. Nevertheless, it may also be turned appropriately thus; I grant ye are gods, and the children of the Most High. In the matter itself there is small difference: for the

prophet means only, that judges are not excused by pretence of their honour, so that they should escape the punishment of their faults. For the condition upon which they are set over the world is, that they themselves also must one day appear at the judgment-seat of heaven, to render up their account, and therefore the dignity wherewith they are endued, is but temporal, which shall pass away together with the fashion of the world. In which sense he adds immediately, *but ye shall die as men*; as if he should say, although they are endued with power to rule the world, yet for all that they have not put off their nature, that they should cease to be men. The latter part of the verse is mistranslated by some, in my judgment, thus; *ye shall fall like one of the princes*; and they think that there is a violent death threatened them, according as the poet says, "Few kings and tyrants go down to the son-in-law of Ceres by a dry death, without slaughter and bloodshed." But forasmuch as that translation is constrained, and far-fetched, I doubt not but princes are compared to the base and common sort of men. For this word *one*, signifies any of the common sort; therefore although they forget themselves to be men, and make themselves drunk with illusive hopes of immortality, yet shall they be haled to death as well as other men. Christ purposing to confute the slander wherewith the Pharisees charged him, alleged this text, John x. 35; *If the scripture, says he, call them gods, to whom God's commandment came; is not he much worthier of this title whom God the Father hath sealed?* Nevertheless, Christ did not by these words place himself in the number of judges: but he reasoneth from the less likely to the more likely, that if the name of God be transferred to God's officers, much more agrees it with the only-begotten Son, who beareth the person of the Father, in whom the Father's majesty shineth forth, and in whom the whole fulness of the godhead dwelleth.

8 *Arise O God, &c.*] Why this Psalm is closed with a prayer, I have stated at the beginning. For the prophet, perceiving that he can do no good by admonishing and rebuking, because princes being puffed up with pride, scorn all doctrine of righteousness; turns himself to God, and calls upon him to suppress their stateliness. And by this means the Holy Ghost setteth forth a comfort for us, as often as tyrants vex us at their lust: for although they meet with no bridle upon earth to restrain their licentiousness, yet must we look up to heaven, and seek redress thence, because it is not for nought that God claimeth to himself the office of judging the world. And therefore we must

beseech him to adjust disorders according to a righteous rule. The reason that follows soon after, seems to some to be a prophecy concerning Christ's kingdom, whereby God hath brought all nations under obedience to him. But I extend it further; that obedience is due to God of mere right among all nations, and that his prerogative of bearing rule, is wickedly and unjustly wrested from him by tyrants, when they set his commandment at nought, and make a medley of right and wrong. And therefore we must desire him to recover his sovereignty, by setting the world in due order.

PSALM LXXXIII.

The prophet calls for God's help against the enemies of the church. And that he may the more easily obtain, he declares how many nations have conspired together, and with this design, namely, to extirpate the people of Israel, and to extinguish the name of God's church. By the way, to stir up himself and others to pray with greater confidence, he shews, by alleging many examples, how mightily God hath been wont to succour his servants.

[*A Song or Psalm of Asaph.*]

2 Hold not thy peace, O God: keep not silence with thyself, and be not still, O God.

3 For, lo, thine enemies bestir them; and they that hate thee have lift up their head.

4 They have found out a crafty device against thy people, and they have consulted against thy hidden ones.

5 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from a nation: and let not the name of Israel be had any more in remembrance.

2 *Hold not thy peace, &c.*] What is agreed upon by the consent of many, that this Psalm was made in the time of king Josaphat, I also approve of. For we know what an arduous war that godly king endured against many and sundry armies of his enemies. For although the Ammonites and Moabites were the chief ringleaders of the wars, yet had they gathered aid not only out of Syria, but also out of far countries, which had in a manner overwhelmed Judah with their multitude. Forasmuch then as here is rehearsed a long roll of enemies that had conspired among themselves

to destroy God's people, it is likely that this Psalm was endited at that time. For the sacred chronicles report, both that one of the Levites promised the king victory by the spirit of prophecy, and also that the Levites sang before God. Now as it could not be but that in so great dangers the whole realm was in hazard as well as the holy king, here is contained a prayer full of earnestness and solicitude. And hereto tends the repetition of the words that occur immediately in the first verse, *hold not thy peace, keep not silence, be not still*. As if the faithful should say, if God were minded to help them, he would never have time to do it unless he made speed. Now although it be our duty to tarry patiently if God at any time delay his help, yet he giveth our meekness leave to request this making haste. I have translated it *keep not silence with thyself*: but word for word, it is *keep not silence to thyself*, which some expound paraphrastically, *hold not thy tongue in thine own case*, which exposition I have omitted as too subtle. But this manner of speech implies as much as if it had been said, *hold not thyself within*. And it may be also a superfluous particle, as it is in divers other places.

3 *For lo, thine enemies, &c.*] Here is expressed the necessity; namely, that the faithful are oppressed as well by the violence and force of their enemies, as by their crafty policies, so that there was no way for them to escape death. And as such extremity greatly depresses the minds of the godly, so their only relief is to make their moan to God, whose continual duty it is to repress the proud. And therefore commonly when the saints call upon God for help, they are wont to allege before him the frowardness of their enemies, (and it is to be noted that they are all called God's enemies who trouble his church,) for it is no small assurance of trust to have our enemies God's enemies. This flows out of his free covenant, by which he hath promised to be an enemy to all our enemies; and for good cause, for since he hath taken us under his protection, our welfare cannot be touched but his majesty must be impeached therewith. In the meanwhile we must keep peace with all men, so far as we may, and we must apply our hearts to uprightness, that we may safely boast before God that we are wronged, inasmuch as we are assailed undeservedly. Now howsoever the pride and violent assaults of our enemies be joined with craftiness, yet must God have his glory yielded him, in contenting ourselves to be succoured at his hand. For as he is wont to break the proud that foam out their madness, so also is he wont to catch the crafty in their own craftiness. Moreover, lest we might think ourselves abandoned to the policies

and snares of our enemies, the prophet seasonably encourages us with an addition full of comfort and hope, calling us *God's hidden ones*. For whereas some draw it the other way, because the help of God wherewith we are defended is not seen; even as in another place, Col. iii. 3, the life of the faithful is said to be *hidden*, it is overstrained, and far removed as well from the meaning as the words of the prophet. For he teaches simply, that we are shrouded under the shadow of God's wings, because although we seem to lie open, and to be exposed to the lust of our enemies, yet are we preserved by the hidden power of God. And therefore it is said in another place, *Thou shalt hide me in the secret of thy tabernacle*, Ps. xxvii. 5. At the same time however it is to be noted, that none are shrouded under God's keeping but such as distrusting their own strength, flee in haste unto God. For they that believe themselves able to make good resistance, and encounter boldly and war wanton, as though they were free from all fear, shall in the end suffer the consequence of their helplessness. And therefore there is no surer refuge than to lie hid under the shadow of the Almighty, while conscious of our own weakness we repose our salvation in his bosom.

5 *They have said, &c.*] The heinousness of the matter is increased by this circumstance, that the wicked were bent to cut up the church by the root. This may be restrained to the Ammonites and Moabites, who were as bellows to blow up the flame in the rest. But as by their instigation the Hagarenes, the Syrians, and the other nations, incensed with similar hatred and fury, had unsheathed the sword to destroy God's people, we may fitly apply this saying to them all; namely, because upon the making of their league, they rushed forward with rival eagerness, and encouraged one another to destroy the kingdom of Judah. Now the cause of such cruel hatred was, chiefly, because Satan has always gone about to root out God's church, and therefore has not ceased to stir up his imps to outrage. *To cut them off from a nation*, signifies to root them utterly out, that they may be no more a nation or people: which appears more evidently by the second member, *That the name of Israel be no more had in remembrance*. And this circumstance avails to provoke God to mercy, because this war was not taken in hand after the common manner of wars, that when they were conquered and subdued, they should be at their enemies' command to serve them, but that their enemies' cruelty tended to their utter destruction. And it was precisely the same as if they had gone about to overthrow God's decree, whereon the eternal duration of the church was founded.

6 For they have consulted in heart together, and have made a league against thee.

7 The tents of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; Moab, and the Hagarenes.

8 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines; with them that dwell at Tyre;

9 Assur also is joined with them: they have been an arm to the children of Lot. Selah.

6 *For they have consulted, &c.*] Here he musters up the huge hosts that laid their powers together to work the overthrow of God's church. Seeing, then, that so many nations, in so powerful a league, bent themselves to the destruction of so weak a kingdom, it was needful that they should be rescued betimes by the miraculous help of God, considering that they were of no ability to defend themselves. And yet in a similar extremity the holy king Asa broke out with that heroic reflection, 2 Chron. xiv. 11, *It is no hard matter for the Lord to succour us, whether it be against a great army or a small; neither may our fewness hinder him to save us from a huge multitude.* Verily, the self-same Spirit that endued that godly king with such invincible courage, endited also this Psalm to the whole church, that it might resort fearlessly to God for help. And at this day also he goeth before us by his word, lest any danger may close the gate upon our cries to God. For howsoever the whole world conspire against us, this is set as a brazen wall for the defence of Christ's church, *Why do the heathen rage? &c.*: Psalm ii. 1. Neither profits it us a little to behold in this example, as it were in a glass, what has happened to God's church from the beginning, lest at this day the same, or a similar state of things, might overpower us, while the whole world is set against us. For we see how the pope with devilish malice sets the whole world on fire against us. Therefore, whithersoever we turn our eyes, as many hostile armies will meet us to destroy us. But when we shall have persuaded ourselves that no strange thing happens unto us, we shall be encouraged to patience by the lot of the church of old, until God send forth his power suddenly, which alone will be enough to frustrate all the practices of the world. Furthermore, lest the faithful might have misgivings whether there were help prepared for them from heaven, the prophet avouches plainly that they make war against God, whosoever they be that trouble the church, which is maintained by his defence. For we know upon what condition he saith he will be our helper. *He that toucheth you,*

saith he, *toucheth the apple of mine eye*: Zech. ii. 8. And that which is said in another Psalm, concerning the patriarchs, is extended to all the faithful: *Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm*: Psalm cv. 15. For he will have the anointing wherewith he hath anointed us to be as good as a buckler to keep us safe and sound. Wherefore, although the nations that are numbered up here made not open defiance against God, yet, as when God seeth his servants wrongfully assaulted, he thrusteth himself between them and their enemies to ward off the blows, the prophet therefore justly says that *all they had entered into league against God*. Even as at this day, when the papists lay their heads together to compass our destruction, if a man ask them whether they be stronger than God, they will straightway reply that it is no part of their purpose to assault heaven after the manner of the giants. But as God avoucheth that as often as we are harmed he himself also is impeached, it is meet that we should out of the watch-tower of faith view afar off that which they shall at length feel by proof. Some expound, *to consult in the heart*, to deliberate earnestly, and with great heed; even as we say a thing is done from the heart which is done with an ardent and earnest mind. But rather by this word the prophet meant to denote the secret wiles, of which he has complained a little before. Some interpreters refer *the tents of Edom* to their equipment for the war, as though the prophet should say they came well furnished with tents to hold out the wars; but he seems rather to allude to the manner of those nations, because they lived under tents. Nevertheless, it is a hyperbolical expression, as if he should say that they even plucked up their tents for the great desire that they had to this war. As for every several nation, I purpose not curiously to treat of them, because the greater part of them are well enough known by the common use of scripture. But whereas he says that Assur and others were *an arm to the children of Lot*, truly hereby the heinousness of the matter is not a little increased. It had been a piece of unnatural cruelty to have aided foreign nations against their own kindred. But now to blow the trumpet first themselves, and, contrary to all reason, fetch in the Assyrians, and the other nations, to destroy their own brethren, is not such brutal barbarity worthy of all detestation? For, as Josephus himself relates, the Israelites had passed through their borders without offence or harm, because they spared their own blood at the command of God. Considering, then, that the Moabites and Ammonites saw that a remembrance of their consanguinity lived in the hearts of their brethren, ought not they

also, on their part, to have shewn as much kindness in turn as not to have attempted any hostility against them? But this also is as it were the destiny of the church, not only to be assailed by outward enemies, but also to suffer more trouble at the hands of spurious brethren; like as at this day, none are more importunately mad upon us than counterfeit Christians.

10 Do to them as unto the Midianites, as to Sisera, and as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison.

11 They perished in En-dor; and became as dung of the earth.

12 Make them, make the princes of them as Oreb and as Zeeb; and like as Zebah and as Zalmunna, all the princes of them:

13 Which have said, Let us take into our possession the habitations of God.

10 *Do to them, &c.*] After the faithful have complained of their terrible oppressions, that God should be the forwarder to help them, now they call to remembrance how often he had helped his people in desperate extremities. Whereby it is easy to gather that God delayeth his help advisedly when his servants are oppressed, to succour them miraculously when they are at the last cast and forlorn. The prophet mingles two histories together; for he should have knit together, in one strain, *Do unto them as to the Midianites, in the brook Kison.* But he intermingles the slaughter of Jabin and Sisera, and yet the punctuation makes no important difference. For it was enough for him to put himself, and the rest of the faithful, in mind of the miracles that God had oftentimes wrought in delivering his people. For this is the end he aims at, that God, who had so often put his enemies to flight, and rescued his fearful sheep out of the mouths of the wolves, is not now destitute of the same strength. It is well known how marvellously he helped his people by the hand of Gideon: Judges, vi. For it might have seemed a very mockery, that Gideon durst encounter a most puissant army, leading with him only three hundred men of war, and especially such as, being inured only to slavery, might have been put to flight with the mere look of their lords. And yet it came to pass that the Midianites perished by turning their swords against each other. The same goodness of God appeared in the slaughter of Sisera and king Jabin: Judges, iv. For both of them were, under the conduct of a woman, put to flight by Barak, who adventured to set a small handful against their huge hosts.

Yea and Sisera the captain himself was not slain manfully in the battle, but stricken by the hand of a woman, when he sought covert. Therefore, lest fear might drive the faithful to despair, they fortify themselves seasonably with these examples of deliverance, whereby God hath avouched that there resides power enough in himself alone to defend his servants as often as, being destitute of man's help, they flee to him for succour. Moreover, by that incredible and unwonted mode of deliverances, they gathered that God is a wonderful work-master in preserving his church; so that they might well assure themselves that his blast alone is of sufficient strength to overthrow their enemies. Neither in this place is this slaughter of the Midianites related to this end, but also Isaiah, ix. 3, confirms the restitution of the church by the same reason. Where he says they were *dung of the earth*, it may be expounded two ways; either that they rotted upon the earth, or that they were trampled under foot as dung: and this latter exposition suits best, and yet I reject not the former. Why he should say, *they perished in En-dor*, there appears no manifest reason. This name *En-dor* is read of in Joshua, xvii. 11; and it is likely that the host of king Jabin was destroyed there. For though some take *En-dor* to be spoken but as an appellative, as though it had been said they were destroyed openly, and with manifest slaughter, I like it not.

13 *Which have said, &c.*] Again he accuses the heathen men of treason to godward for seizing upon God's heritage like lawless robbers. Sure it is that they pretended not this in words, but inasmuch as they despised God whom they knew to be worshipped of the Israelites, with good cause he loads them with this guilt, that they went about to dispossess God of his inheritance. And no doubt they railed upon the true God, so that, besotted in their own imaginations, they esteemed his holy godhead as nought. But admit that they abstained from gross blasphemies, yet what is wrought against the godly redounds to the dishonour of God, who hath received them under his defence. Moreover there lies hid no small comfort in this manner of speaking, when the prophet terms Judah *the habitation of God*, for he hath joined himself to us upon this condition, that he may have an everlasting rest and dwelling among us, or rather that he may make as great account, and set as much store by his church as a householder does by the best thing that he is owner of.

14 O my God, make them as a wheel, and as halm before the wind.

15 As the fire burneth the wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire,

16 So follow thou upon them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.

17 Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O God.

18 Let them be put to shame and fear for ever and ever, and let them be confounded and perish.

19 And let them know that thou art thy name JEHOVAH, that thou only art high over all the earth.

14 *O my God, &c.*] As the insolence of the ungodly is intolerable while they set themselves to destroy the church, the prophet desires God to put them to shame, for otherwise their pride cannot be abated till they lie under foot confounded and shamefully defeated. And whereas the prophet says that thereby it will come to pass *that they shall seek the name of God*, it must not in my judgment be understood of their true conversion. I confess, indeed, that the first step to amendment is when men, being brought low by affliction, do humble themselves willingly. But the prophet denotes simply a constrained and slavish submission, such as Pharaoh's was. For it often happens that the wicked, being subdued by adversity, give glory to God for a little while. But forasmuch as after a little while they are carried away again with frantick madness, hereby their hypocrisy is discovered, and the stubbornness that lurked in their hearts betrays itself. He means then that the ungodly are compelled by stripes to acknowledge God whether they will or no, that at least their fury, that breaks forth from impunity, may be held bound and imprisoned. And this appears better by the next verse, where he openly prays for their eternal damnation, which would in nowise apply if he had allured them to repentance. Neither is it for nought that the prophet accumulates so many words, partly because the reprobates, such is their untameable nature, though they are often chastised, notwithstanding from time to time gather new strength and new courage, and partly because nothing is more hard to be persuaded of, than that such as wallow at ease in prosperity shall soon perish. And this comes to pass because we consider not sufficiently what dreadful vengeance of God awaits the oppressors of his church.

19 *And let them know, &c.*] As yet also he treats not of the salvation-giving recognition of God, but such as is wrung from the reprobates by the resistless hand of God.

Howbeit, he says not simply that *they shall know there is a God*, but he sets down a special kind of knowledge, that the worldly, who erewhile despised the true religion, shall in the end perceive that the one only God is he that hath made himself known in the law, and is worshipped in Judah. Still it must be remembered that he denotes only a fading knowledge without root and lively sap, because it is neither in good earnest nor with their goodwill that the reprobate submit themselves to God, but either they are drawn to a counterfeit obedience by force, or else, inasmuch as he holdeth them short, they dare not burst out into open rage. This therefore is an experimental recognition, which pierces not to the heart, but is wrung from them by force and necessity. And there is an emphasis in the pronoun *thou*, for there is a tacit antithesis between the God of Israel and all other feigned gods, as if the prophet had said, Lord, make them to perceive that the idols which they have forged to themselves are nothing. And truly, although the despisers of God shun the light, one while overcasting themselves with mists, and another while diving into deep darkness, yet doth God pursue them, and draw them out to the knowledge of himself, which they would feign bury in ignorance. And because the world indiscriminately and shamefully transfer the sacred name of God to their own forgeries, the prophet corrects this profanation, together with the rest, when he adds *thy name Jehovah*; as if he should say that that being is truly applicable to him alone, or really to be, as it is said, because howsoever the unbelievers dismember his glory, yet doth he continue whole and unchanged. Always you must bear in mind the antithesis that I told you of. For there has not been any so barbarous a nation that worshipped not some manner of godhead, but every country forged peculiar gods to themselves. And although the Moabites, Edomites, and the residue, granted some prerogative to the God of Israel, yet thought they that it was confined within the borders of Judah, even as the king of Syria called him *the god of the mountains*, 1 Kings, xx. 23. This preposterous partition of God's glory is disproved in one word, and all the superstition that was in the world at that time is overthrown by granting to the one God of Israel as well his being as his name. For unless all the idols of the heathen are done away, he will not alone hold the name of Jehovah, and therefore here is added, *thou only art high over all the earth*, which is to be marked with heed. For the superstitious for the most part think it enough to leave God his name, that is to say, two or three syllables, whereas in the meanwhile they fritter away his

power as though his majesty were contained in the empty title. Be it known, therefore, that God hath not his pre-eminence among men, otherwise than when he enjoyeth the sovereignty that belongeth to him, and that nothing is matched against him to darken his glory.

PSALM LXXXIV.

He complains that nothing troubles him more than to be kept from coming to the tabernacle, and to be banished from the assembly of the godly, where God is called upon. But yet he says that nothing is able to withstand the longing of the godly, that they should not constantly force their way to seek God. At length he desires to be restored, and once again avouches that to dwell but one day in the tabernacle of God is more worth to him than to live a long time among the faithless.

[*To the chief chanter upon Gittith. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.*]

2 How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!

3 My soul longeth, yea, and fainteth, after the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

4 Yea, the sparrow hath found her a house, and the swallow a nest for her, where she may bestow her young ones, O thine altars, thou Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.

5 Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be always praising thee.

1 *To the chief chanter, &c.*] Although David's name is not inscribed upon it, yet as the matter applies to his person, it is likely that he was the author of it. For whereas some think it was made by the sons of Korah in his behalf, to my seeming this one consideration is sufficient to disprove, namely, that David in his time excelled too much in the gift of prophecy to commit this charge to the Levites. Only one difficulty stands in the way, namely, that he makes mention of mount Sion, to which place the ark of the covenant was not brought before he was settled quietly in his kingdom. And from that time forth he was only once for a short time bereft of the sight of the ark, when he fled from his son. But the words of the Psalm declare that he was harassed at that time with long and various banishments. But if we consider

that David a long time after comprised in Psalms the things that he had suffered under Saul, we shall not wonder that he names mount Sion therewith. Of the word *Gittith*, I have spoken heretofore in the eighth Psalm.

2 *How amiable, &c.*] David complains that he is deprived of a place in God's church, so that he cannot utter his faith, nor profit in godliness, nor exercise himself in the service of God. For as for those that would have God's *tabernacles* to signify the kingdom of heaven, as though David should mourn that he was a pilgrim in the world, they do not sufficiently consider his present necessity. He knew that holy assemblies were not appointed by God for nought, since the faithful have need of such helps as long as they are wayfarers in this world. Also he was conscious of his own infirmity, not being ignorant how far he was off from the perfection of angels: wherefore not without cause bewaileth he that he is bereft of those means whereof the use is well known to the godly. For no doubt he had an eye to the right end of the external ritual, for he was not like the hypocrites, who, while they frequent solemn assemblies with great pomp, although they seem all fervour, yet purpose to acquit themselves by a mere parade of piety towards God. Truly David was not occupied about this gross forgery, but his wishing so earnestly to have access freely to the sanctuary, was that he might worship God there sincerely and after a spiritual manner. The exclamation is a sign of earnest affection, which he expresses more fully in the second verse; whereby we gather that they are sadly deficient in understanding who carelessly neglect the order appointed by God, as though they could mount up into heaven by their own strength. I have said that in the second verse is expressed more than an ordinary manner of longing: for whereas כסף signifies *to long sore for a thing*, being not contented with the word, he adds that *his soul fainteth after the courts of God*, which denotes as much as to pine away when we are bereft of our wits by excessive zeal. And he put *courts*, because being no priest it was not lawful for him to go any further: for we know that none but the priests might enter into the inner sanctuary. At length he declares that this longing is extended even to his body, in that it shewed itself by outward gesture in mouth, eyes, and hands. And he says, *to the living God*; not that God was shut up in a narrow tent, but because he knew he had need of steps whereby to climb up into heaven, and that the visible sanctuary was instead of steps, because they directed the godly minds to the heavenly pattern. And certainly, considering that the inertia of the flesh suffers us not to mount up to

the height of God, in vain would he call us to him unless he on the other side came down unto us; or at least, by interposing means, did after a sort stretch out his hand to us to lift us up.

4 *Yea, the sparrow, &c.*] Some read this verse continuously, as though the prophet should say that the birds make their nests near to the altars; whereby it appears how severe was his lot, who was kept away from it. And this meaning is supported by the particle *וְכֵן*, which most commonly is joined with an accusative. But as now and then it serves also for exclamations, I doubt not but that the prophet, breaking off his sentence in the midst, cries out that nothing would do his heart more good than the sight of God's altar. First, therefore, David enhances his misery by comparing himself with the sparrows and swallows, for it is a hard case for the children of Abraham to be driven out of their promised heritage, seeing that the little birds find some place or other for their nests. And although he sometimes obtained at a comfortable retreat, or rather might dwell among the unbelievers with some estimation, yet he seemed to himself to be after a sort banished from the whole world as long as he had no access to the sanctuary: for surely the end to which we live is that we should occupy ourselves in serving God. Now, although he is not worshipped aright except he is worshipped spiritually, yet have we need of the succours which not without cause he hath appointed us. And this is the reason why David bursts forth into this exclamation, *O thine altars, O Lord, &c.* For as it had been easy to have objected that there are many retreats in the world where he might have rested safely, or rather that there are many hosts that would have been glad of such a guest, and so he troubled himself unnecessarily, he answers, that he had rather forsake the whole world than be debarred from the holy tabernacle, for he thought no place pleasant that was far from God's altars, or rather, he liked no dwelling-place out of the holy land. And hereto pertain the titles that he gives to God, when he says, *My King, and my God.* For he intimates that his life is painful and bitter to him, because he is banished from the kingdom of God; as if he should say, Although all men would offer me entertainment eagerly, what would it pleasure me to live in the world as long as I am shut out of thy borders, seeing that thou art my King? Again; Seeing thou art my God, wherefore should I live but to seek thee? And seeing thou castest me off, why should I not despise all dwellings, howsoever pleasant and delightful to my flesh?

5 *Blessed are they, &c.*] Here he determines more ex-

pressly the right and lawful use of the sanctuary, and so he distinguishes himself from the hypocrites, who also come flocking apace to the outward ceremonies, but void of godly devotion. And David avouches that the true worshippers of God bring the sacrifice of praise, which cannot be severed from faith. For none can praise God from the heart, but he that, resting upon his grace, enjoys the peace and gladness of the Spirit.

6 Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; and thy ways are in their hearts.

7 They, travelling through the valley of weeping, will dig a well: yea and rain also shall cover their pits.

8 They shall go from strength to strength; the God of gods shall be seen in Sion,

6 *Blessed is the man, &c.*] Again he declares that he seeks the sanctuary, not to delight his eyes, but to further his faith. For it is more than an ordinary kind of profiting to lean upon God with one's whole heart, which cannot be done except all pride be cast down, and men's minds truly humbled. But he determines that the means to seek God is, for him to borrow of him by petition the strength whereof he feels himself destitute. What follows immediately, that *his ways are in their hearts*, some expound in one strain, thus; that they are happy who follow the way appointed by God, because nothing is more hurtful than to be wise according to the fleshly understanding. Neither is it for nought that it is said of the law, *This is the way, walk ye in it*; Is. xxx. 21. True it is then, that men are led about with untoward errors, when they step never so little aside from God's word. But it is better restrained to the present circumstance, that they are happy who covet to have God the director of their life, and therefore desire to come to him. For, as has been said, God careth not for the outward ceremonies, but will rule and subdue to himself such as he calleth to his tabernacle. Whosoever, therefore, has learned how great a blessedness it is to lean upon God, will apply all his endeavour and all his thoughts to hie him with all speed to God.

7 *They, travelling, &c.*] His meaning is that nothing can bar the wise and determined worshippers of God from hastening to God's sanctuary. And by this manner of speech he confirms that which he said before, that nothing is more to be wished than to be occupied daily in God's service, inas-

much as no distresses nor hindrances can obstruct the longings of the godly, so that they will not run cheerfully together through drouthy and desert places, to frequent holy meetings. Because the word כננ signifies *to weep*, and the letter נ and כ are of affinity, so that the one is turned into the other, many translate it, *the vale of weeping*. Nevertheless, the opinion of those is allowable who translate it *mulberries*, though there is no doubt but that here are denoted barren and hungry deserts, through which it is hard to travel. For nothing is more needful in travelling, than drink. David therefore meant to avouch the constancy of the godly, inasmuch as the scarcity of water, for want whereof travellers faint, cannot hinder them from keeping on their way apace through the sandy dales, to seek God. By which words the slothfulness of those is reprov'd, who are loath to endure any inconvenience when they may profit in the service of God. They delight themselves in their own ease and pleasure. Therefore, provided they may not need to stir their foot, they can find in their hearts to profess themselves the servants of God; but as for the free use of the doctrine and sacraments, they will not purchase it with a hair. We see how many are tied to their nests by this slothful feeling, that they cannot abide to forego their own convenience in any respect, no not even when they are called to common prayers, to the hearing of the doctrine of salvation, or to the partaking of the holy mysteries. We see some asleep, some busying themselves about gain, some entangled with worldly matters, yea and others even at play. Wherefore it is no marvel though such as be far off, and such as cannot enjoy these helps of salvation without the hindrance of their profit, tarry still at home. But that they may not rest self-satisfied in their own delights, David avouches that such as set their hearts upon godliness, and serve God in good earnest, go forward, not only by an easy and cheerly way, in the shade, and by pleasant paths, but also even through rough wildernesses, and will rather make themselves cisterns with immense toil, than that the drouth of the region shall obstruct their journey. The same repeats he in the next verse: for as by the appointment of the law, after the ark of the covenant was removed into mount Sion, the holy assemblies were kept there, he says that the faithful shall come thither zealously. The word חיל seldom signifies *a troop* or *band of men*, but it often signifies *power* or *strength*. Therefore, according to the common use of the tongue, it will be more fit to translate it, *they shall go from strength to strength*; as if he should say, the faithful, gather-

ing strength fresh and fresh, go up to mount Sion, and tire not for any weariness till they come to the sight of God's countenance. Notwithstanding, if any one prefer the word *troop*, the sense will be, that not a few only shall come, but very many companies. Moreover, how God appeared to his servants in old time in the temple, is declared elsewhere, and especially in Ps. xxvii. 4, 5. For although there was there no visible image of God, yet as the ark of the covenant was a symbol of God's presence, the faithful found by experience that this help was a profitable furtherance to them in coming to God.

9 O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer: hearken unto me, O God of Jacob. Selah.

10 Look upon us, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

11 For better is one day in thy courts, than a thousand *elsewhere*; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness.

12 For the Lord God is our sun and shield: the Lord shall give us grace and glory; he will not shut up good from them that walk uprightly.

13 O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

9 O Lord God, &c.] Because worldlings pine and torture themselves foolishly and unprofitably in their own desires, David wisely turns his desires to God. And hereby also it appears that he was not given to ambitious boastings, as many hypocrites are, who pretend a wonderful fervour outwardly, to whose inward coldness God is the witness. First, generally, he desires to be heard; afterwards, because he might seem to be cut off by the church, he prevents this temptation, accompanying and gathering himself with all the godly under the protection of God. For except he had been a member of the church, he could not, universally and as it were in the person of all, have said, *our shield*. By and by also he mounts yet higher, alleging the anointing which God had vouchsafed him by the hand of Samuel, 1 Sam. xvi. 12. For to say, *look upon the face of thine anointed*, is a forcible kind of speaking, which many interpreters pass over with too much detriment to the sense. For he promises himself God's favour in this respect, because he had been anointed king by his command. And

because he knew his kingdom to be but typical, no doubt he endeavoured to purchase himself favour, by alleging the Mediator whose character he represented; as if he should say, Although I am unworthy of myself to be set up again by thee, yet is this deserved by the anointing whereby thou hast made me the type of the only Redeemer. By which words we are taught that God will not otherwise be made at one with us than by Christ's coming forward, the sight of whom chases away all the mists of our sins.

11 *For better is, &c.*] Whereas the greater part of the world covet to live they know not why, and wish nothing but that their life might be prolonged, David avouches here that not only the end for which he determines to live is to serve God, but also that he sets more by one day which he may bestow in the service of God, than to live a long time among worldlings from whom the religion of God is banished. And as it was lawful for none but the priests only to enter into the temple, David declares expressly, that if he may but sit without in the porch, he will hold himself contented with his lot: for *פֶּתַח* signifies *a side-post, or threshold of a house*. And this comparison enhances the matter greatly, when he says *he had rather tarry at the very doors of the temple, than to possess the tents of ungodliness*; as if he had said he had rather be cast into a common and unhonoured place, provided he may be reckoned among God's people, than to hold the chief seat among the ungodly: a rare example of godliness indeed. For although there are many that would fain have a place in the church, yet does ambition prevail so much, that very few can content themselves to abide in the number of the common sort. For in a manner all are carried away with the frantick desire of climbing higher; so that they can find no place to stand still except they may overtop others.

12 *For the Lord, &c.*] The comparison of the sun tends to this, that as the sun with his light gives life, nourishment, and joy to the world, so are the faithful refreshed with the serene countenance of God, or rather, neither live nor breathe otherwise than so far forth as God shineth upon them. By the term *shield*, the prophet means that our welfare, which otherwise were in hazard of innumerable dangers, is shielded by his defence. For it were not enough for God's favour to give us life, except he should also set his might before us in defence of us against so many dangers. What follows afterwards, that *he shall give grace and glory*, might be taken thus; that whom God hath garnished with his grace in this world, he will crown at length with heavenly glory in his own kingdom. But as I fear that

distinction is too subtle, it will be better, in my judgment, to expound the sentence thus; After God hath embraced the faithful with his favour, he will advance them to high honour, and never cease to enrich them with his gifts; which also he confirms in this next member, saying, *he will not shut up good from them that walk uprightly*; as if he should say, God's bounty is never exhausted, but floweth without ceasing. In the meanwhile we gather from these words, that whatsoever excellence is in us, flows out of the mere grace of God. Herewith he gives a special mark to know the worshippers of God by; namely, that their life is framed according to uprightness. The exclamation he makes in the end of the Psalm, *they are blessed who trust in the Lord*, seems to have reference to the time of his banishment. He had said before, that *they were happy who dwell in the courts of the Lord*: and now, although he was debarred from that felicity for a time, yet denies he himself to have been utterly miserable, because, upon assurance of the best of consolation, he beheld God's favour afar off. And it is an example worthy to be noted: for as long as we are debarred from God's benefits, we must needs groan for sorrow and heaviness. But lest the feeling of our misery should overwhelm us, it behoves us to believe that even in the midst of our miseries we are blessed through hope and patience.

PSALM LXXXV.

Because God had scourged the faithful with new troubles and calamities after their return from the thralldom of Babylon, first, they make mention of their deliverance, that he should not leave the work of his grace unfinished; afterwards, they complain of the long continuance of their miseries; thirdly, lifted up by hope and affiance, they boast of the blessedness that had been promised them, because the bringing of them home again into their country was connected with Christ's kingdom, whence they hoped for abundance of all good things.

[To the chanter. *A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.*]

2 O Lord, thou hast been favourable to thy land :
thou hast brought again the captivity of Jacob.

3 Thou hast taken away the iniquity of thy people ;
thou hast covered all their sins. Selah.

4 Thou hast turned away all thine anger : thou
hast called back the fierceness of thy wrath.

5 Turn us, O God of our welfare, and remit thy
displeasure towards us.

2 *O Lord, thou, &c.*] They that translate these words in the time to come seem, in my judgment, to mar the prophet's meaning. It is likely that this Psalm was dictated to the people when they were plagued with the cruel tyranny of Antiochus; and therefore hope of new and continual grace hereafter, is ministered to them by their former deliverance, because by this means God had testified that the remembrance of his covenant could not be quenched by any sins, but that he would be merciful towards the children of Abraham. For unless they had had experience before, of God's great goodness, they could not but have been overwhelmed with the hugeness of their miseries, especially continuing so long as they did. Now that they were delivered, they determine the cause to be in God's free love, wherewith he embraced his land because he had chosen it. Whence it follows, that the course of this goodwill was continual; and thence the faithful gather confidence to pray, because God, being mindful of his election, had been merciful to his own land. And I have told you heretofore, that nothing encourages us more effectually to praying, than when we remember God's former benefits: for our faith would straightway faint in adversity, and sorrow would choke our hearts, if the experience of the former time did not warrant us that God is merciful to his servants, and always succoureth them at their need, especially since there is the same cause of continuing his goodness. And so the prophet applies wisely to the faithful of his time the benefits that God had bestowed upon their fathers long ago, because both they and their fathers were called unto the hope of the same inheritance.

3 *Thou hast taken away, &c.*] As the sins of the faithful might have stricken them with fear and heaviness, the prophet despatches this doubt also, because God had put forth a signal proof of free forgiveness by delivering his people. He had shewn before, that the fountain was God's free goodwill; but after that enmity had intervened between God and them, whereby the people had estranged themselves from him, it was needful that this remedy should come in to aid them. For in saying their iniquities were taken away, he means not that the faithful were corrected and purged from their sins like as God by sanctifying them with the spirit of regeneration taketh away their sins in very deed, but he declares immediately what he meant. The effect is, that God was reconciled to the Jews by not imputing their sins to them. For God is said to cover the sins, which he burieth, so that they come not into judgment, as is said more at large in Psalm xxxii. 1. Therefore when he had

chastised the sins of his people by captivity, minding to restore them to their country again, he took away the impediment by wiping away their guiltiness. For upon the remission of the fault depends also the release of the punishment; whereby is disproved the forgery of the sophists, which they brag of as of a great mystery; namely, that God retaineth the punishment, though he forgive the fault; whereas God avoucheth everywhere that the intent to which he pardoneth, is, that being pacified, he should also mitigate the penalties; and that does the prophet confirm again in the next verse, where he says that God was entreatable to his people, so that he withdrew his hand from chastising them. What can the sophists jabber against this, who deny that God is righteous, unless after he hath forgiven the fault he execute punishment according to the severity of his justice? For the effect that follows forgiveness of the fault is, that God should, by his blessing, testify that he is no longer displeased.

5 *Turn us, O God, &c.*] Now do the faithful apply to their present use what they had reported before concerning his fatherly tenderness towards his people whom he had delivered. And they call him by whom they desire to be restored, *the God of their salvation*, that in extreme distress they may yet nourish the hope that they shall be preserved by the power of God. For although he offer not visible matter of good hope, yet behoves it us to believe that our welfare rests in his hand, and that he can easily and readily find means to manifest the same as often as he list. And as God's displeasure is the cause and ground of all miseries, the faithful also beseech him now to withdraw it. And this order is to be marked advisedly, for so tender and fainthearted is our nature in bearing adversity, that as soon as God beginneth to smite us with his little finger, we beseech him dolefully to spare us. But the chief thing we omit, namely, that he should acquit us of our guilt, because we are not willing to stoop to examine ourselves.

6 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou prolong thy wrath from age to age?

7 Wilt thou not turn again and quicken us, that thy people may rejoice in thee?

8 Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy help.

9 I will hearken what the Lord God will say: truly he will speak peace to his people, and to his meek ones, and they shall not return again to foolishness.

6 *Wilt thou be, &c.*] In this place they bewail the long continuance of their miseries, and reason from the nature of God, such as it is described in the law; namely, that *he is slow to wrath, and long-suffering, and forward and ready to forgive*; even as we have seen heretofore also, that *his anger vanisheth in a moment, but his mercy endureth for ever*; Ps. xxx. 5. For so it behoves us in our praying to think upon God's promises which may minister words to us. Now although they seem after a sort to find fault, as though God shewed himself other than he was wont to be, yet is it not to be doubted but that, wrestling manfully with temptation, they sought hope of relief from the nature of God; as though they took this for a principle, that it is not possible that God should be angry for ever. By the way we gather, that when they prayed so, they were laden with miseries till they were wearied. Wherefore we may learn that although God accept us not forthwith into favour openly, yet must not we cease from continual earnestness of praying. If any man object that God promiseth in vain that his anger shall be short, surely if we weigh our own sins it is always short; and if we call to mind the everlasting course of his mercy, we shall confess his wrath to be but for a moment. For as our flesh relapses from time to time into wantonness, it has need of sundry corrections to subdue it thoroughly. In the same sense they ask whether God will not turn to them to quicken them. For as this principle was grounded in their hearts, that the punishments wherewith God chastiseth his children are but for a time, hereby they gather assurance that although God be now justly displeased and turned from them, yet he will be entreatable to them so that he will raise the dead to life again, and turn their mourning into mirth. For by the word *quicken* they complain that they are almost like dead persons, or that they are killed with afflictions. While indeed they promise themselves matter of rejoicing, they mean that now they are well-nigh worn out with sorrow.

8 *Shew us thy, &c.*] There is in these words the same antithesis as before. For in desiring to have mercy shewn them, and help given them, they confess themselves to be deprived of all taste of either of them. Now seeing that the state of the saints was such in old time, we may learn, even when we are oppressed and forlorn with extreme miseries, to resort nevertheless to God. Truly with judgment is *mercy* set in the first place, and afterwards *help* added, which is engendered and brought forth of the other. For God is not induced to be a saviour in any other respect

but because he is merciful. Whence it follows, that as many as plead their own merits to purchase his favour, foreclose the way to their salvation.

9 *I will hearken, &c.*] Here by his own example he exhorts the whole body of the church to quiet and calm endurance. For as he had broken out with a degree of vehement passion, now he holds himself in as it were with a bridle; even as in all our prayers, be they never so godly and holy, we must always beware that they run not into extravagance. For when a man gives way to his own weakness, he is easily carried beyond bounds with excess of fervour. Upon this consideration the prophet enjoins silence to himself and others that they may patiently abide God's time: and by these words he shews himself to be of a settled mind, and as it were to continue in silence, because he is assured that God careth for the church. For had he thought that fortune bare sway in the world, and that mankind are whirled round by a blind impulse, he would not ascribe to God the function of governing. For *to say* in this place imports as much as *to appoint or command*; as if he should say, as he is assured that the remedy of the present miseries is in God's hand, he will quiet himself until the convenient time come that the church may be delivered. Therefore, as the unruliness of our affections raises a tumult against God, so is patience a kind of stilness whereby godly minds hold themselves in awe under his command. In the second member he gathers that the state of the church will be more prosperous, because as it belongs to God to command in men's affairs, it cannot be but he must provide for the welfare of the church which he loveth. I have told you heretofore that by the word *peace* the Hebrews denote *happy success of things*. The effect therefore is, that the church shall be in good plight by the benefit of God. And by the word *speak* the prophet gives an inkling that he will take heed to his promises. For he could have spoken more plainly of God's providence, and have said, *I will see what God will do*. But as the benefits that God bestoweth upon his church flow out of his promises, he mentions his speech rather than his hand, and therewith shews that his patience hangs upon the quiet hearing of faith. When, in respect of God's people, he adds, *his meek ones*, by this mark he puts a difference between God's true people and his pretended people. For as hypocrites proudly challenge to themselves all the privileges of the church, it is expedient that their boasting should be confuted, that they may know they are justly excluded from God's promises. *And they shall not return again*. This is wont to be expounded thus; Lest

they should turn again to their foolishness; as though he added the fruit of God's gracious goodness. For as God allureth his servants to him by dealing graciously with them, that they may continue under his rule, the prophet, as these interpreters suppose, denies that they shall return to their folly, because God's goodness shall be as good as a bridle to rein them in. Now although this exposition be tolerable, yet it will more aptly, in my judgment, be referred to the whole contents of the matter; namely, that after God hath sufficiently corrected his church, he will at length be at one with them, that the saints being schooled by chastisements may take better heed to themselves hereafter. For he shews the cause why God delayeth and deferreth his gracious goodness. For as the physician, though his patient be somewhat eased of his pain, keeps him still under regimen till he be fully recovered, and the cause of his disease be removed, and he grow strong and lusty again, because it were hurtful for him to allow him to use what diet he would at present; so God prolongeth his chastisements because he seeth that we are not in one day well and thoroughly reclaimed from our vices. For otherwise we should soon relapse into them. The prophet therefore assuages the grief wherewith the long continuance of misery would oppress the faithful, with this comfort, that God advisedly layeth more punishment upon them than they would, that they should amend in earnest, and be rendered more wary afterwards.

10 Surely his help is near to them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.

11 Mercy and truth shall meet together; righteousness and peace shall kiss one another.

12 Truth shall bud out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

13 Yea, the Lord shall give good; and our land shall yield her increase.

14 Righteousness shall walk before him, and set her steps in the way.

10 *Surely his help, &c.*] He confirms the last sentence. And although, to all seeming, God was far off from his people, yet he puts himself and other worshippers of God in hope that deliverance is near at hand, because God regardeth secretly those whom he neglecteth openly. Now if you like to take the particle **וְ**, adversatively for *but*, as it is oftentimes taken among the Hebrews, the sentence will be fuller.

For because he had said just now that God proceedeth further in chastising his servants, when he seeth them over prone to falling anew, lest the very delay should be irksome, he adds this restraint, that even when his help seems slowest in coming, then is it near at hand. Certain it is that the glory whereof he speaks in the second part of the verse is matched against the wasteness of the land, which being a token of God's dire displeasure, condemned the land to shame and reproach. By these words, therefore, the prophet encourages himself and others to repentance, admonishing them, and that not without contumely, that they were so sore oppressed with tyranny by their enemies because they had driven God's help away from them by their sins.

11 *Mercy and truth, &c.*] The verbs indeed are of the time past, but yet the text requires to have them turned into the time to come; and I willingly embrace that which is received with consent of many, namely, that this prophecy is extended to the reign of Christ. Neither is it to be doubted but that the faithful lifted up their eyes to Christ as often as the restoration of the church was to be hoped for, especially since the time they returned from Babylon. Meanwhile, the purpose of the prophet is to shew how bountifully God dealeth with his church after he is reconciled. For he says that these fruits spring up from it; namely, that *mercy and truth meet together*, and that *righteousness and peace embrace each other*. Out of these words Austin elicits a charming sense, and full of most sweet comfort; namely, that God's mercy is the beginning and fountain of all his promises, from whence issues righteousness, which is offered us by the Gospel, and out of that righteousness springs peace, which we attain to by faith, when God justifieth us freely. Moreover, by *the looking of righteousness down from heaven*, he understands that it is the free gift of God, and not attained by the deserts of works; and that it comes out of heaven, because it is not to be found among men, who are destitute and void of it. And by the way he declares that truth *buddeth out of the earth*, because God proveth himself faithful in very deed by fulfilling his promise. But as it behoves us to seek solid truth, and not subtleties, let us content ourselves with the natural meaning of the prophet, that Christ's kingdom shall be ennobled with mercy, truth, peace, and righteousness. And because he speaks not of the praise of men, but commends the grace which he had before hoped for, and prayed for at God's hand only, it is to be believed that all these good things flow from God. And by the figure synecdoche, in these four words is described true happiness. For when cruelty rages with impunity, faith is quenched,

righteousness is trampled under foot, and all things are mingled together in a confused broil, were it not better that the world were at an end? Whence it follows that nothing is more desirable towards a happy life than that these four virtues may flourish and bear chief sway, even as the reign of Christ is adorned with very similar encomiums in other places. Notwithstanding, if any one prefer to understand *mercy and faithfulness* of God, I will not gainsay him. Doubtless, truth or faithfulness to bud out of the earth, and righteousness to look down from heaven, imply as much as if he had said that both of them shall be spread abroad everywhere, as well above as beneath, so that they shall fill both heaven and earth. For he meant not to attribute anything separately to either of them, but to avouch generally of them both that there shall be no corner of the earth where they flourish not.

13 *Yea, the Lord, &c.*] Whereas some take this verse allegorically, to be meant of the increase of spiritual goods, it agrees not with the particle **וְ**, by which the prophet seems in my opinion to denote the full measure of that blessedness whereof he spoke. Therefore he sets down here the *fruits of the earth*, as an accession of more excellent bounty. For although the chief happiness of the church be contained in those four gifts that he spoke of, yet is not the comfort of the outward fare to be neglected, provided it keep its proper subordinate place. If any object that plentiful increase of the earth is improperly intermingled with the spiritual reign of Christ, it is easy to answer that it is not at all unreasonable, if God, in blessing the faithful spiritually, give them some taste of his fatherly love in outward benefits also; considering that even, by the witness of Paul, 1 Tim. iv. 8, *Godliness hath promise not of the life to come only, but also of the life present*. But it is to be noted that the comforts of this transitory life are thus limited, that the faithful should not fall asleep in their earthly delights. And therefore I said they had but a taste of God's fatherly love upon earth, and not their fill of worldly wealth. Moreover this verse teaches us that the power and grace of fruitfulness to yield us sustenance was not given to the earth once for all, (as heathenish men surmise, that God appointed to each element its proper charge at his first creation, and now sitteth still and doeth nothing,) but that the earth is from year to year made fruitful by the secret operation of God, according as his will is to have his goodness manifested unto us.

14 *Righteousness, &c.*] Some take *righteousness* for a *righteous person*, but it is harsh. There is indeed a profitable doctrine contained in this sense: that the righteous

man will walk before God, and frame his doings according to uprightness. But as no need constrains to wrest the word *righteousness* so violently, let us take what is more correct and simple; namely, that order shall be so well settled under the reign of Christ, that *righteousness* shall walk before God, and occupy every path. In thiswise he seems to call the faithful back to the chief blessedness, because howsoever God give his servants liberal sustenance, yet it becomes them not to be devoted to it. And surely what we differ in from the brute beasts is this, that God pampereth us not nor stuffeth our bellies that we should enjoy the world, but leadeth us higher. Where he says that *righteousness shall walk before God*, he means that God's appointment is the cause why righteousness has her course; which is as much as *to set her steps in the way*; even as on the contrary part Isaiah, lix. 14, complains that equity cannot go, because she is kept from coming abroad.

PSALM LXXXVI.

This Psalm contains prayers mingled with holy musings to nourish and confirm faith, and furthermore also praises and thanksgivings. For as, according to fleshly reason, it was hard for David to escape from the distresses wherewith he was beset, he sets God's infinite goodness and power against them. Neither craveth he only to be rid of his enemies, but also to have his heart framed to the fear of God, and to be steadfastly settled in the same.

[*David's Prayer.*]

1 Bow down thine ear, O Lord, answer me; for I am poor and helpless.

2 Keep my soul, for I am meek: save thy servant, O God, which putteth his trust in thee.

3 Have mercy upon me, O Lord: for daily do I cry unto thee.

4 Cheer the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

5 For thou, O Lord, art good, and gracious; and of much loving-kindness towards all that call upon thee.

6 O Lord, hearken to my prayer; take heed to the voice of my petitions.

7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee : because thou wilt answer me.

1 *Bow down thine ear, &c.*] Although neither the title shew, nor can it be concluded with certainty from the context, what dangers David complains of here, yet is it likely that at such time as Saul persecuted him his mind was occupied with the things which he has afterwards described here at his better leisure when he was at peace. And not without cause does he allege his miseries before God, that they may procure him favour, considering that nothing is more proper to his nature than to succour the afflicted, and the more severely any man is pressed and bereft of man's help, the more graciously to help him. Wherefore, lest despair may overwhelm our hearts in our greatest afflictions, let us lean on this pillar, that the Holy Ghost hath endited this prayer for the poor and afflicted.

2 *Keep my soul, &c.*] He mentions two other causes whereby to win himself God's help, that is, his own gentleness towards his neighbours, and also the trust that he has reposed in God. Now, though he seem in the first member to pretend some worthiness, yet his purpose shews nothing less than to bind God by any deserts. But the mentioning of his *meekness* tends to charge his enemies with greater hatred, who no less shamefully than uncourteously troubled one who had done them no harm, yea, and had deserved well at their hands. Therefore, as God avoucheth that he will be an advocate as well of good cases as of the followers of righteousness, David has good reason to allege that he had cultivated meekness. Whereby it appears that he is ill rewarded by his enemies, who are gratuitously cruel towards him that is merciful. But because it were not enough to live justly and mercifully in the world, there is also added *trust that stayeth itself upon God*, which is the mother of godliness. We know that some have been endued with such uprightness that they have obtained the praise of being perfectly just among men, even as Aristides gloried that he had never given man cause to be sorry. But as those men, through the excellence of their virtues, were either filled with ambition or puffed up with pride, so that they trusted more to themselves than to God, it is no marvel though they suffered the punishment of their vanity, according as in reading profane histories we foolishly marvel how it comes to pass that God hath given over honest, grave, and temperate persons into the hands of the wicked multitude: whereas they, relying on their own virtue, despised God's grace with im-

pious superciliousness. For as they made an idol of their own virtue, they disdained to lift up their eyes to God. Therefore, though our own consciences accuse us not, and God is the best witness of our innocence, yet if we desire to have his help, we must needs refer our hopes and anxieties to him. If any man object that by this means the gate is shut against sinners, I answer, that when God calleth the guiltless to him, he doth not forthwith bar out all such as are punished for their offences, for they may sue for pardon if they will. But if such as we never offended wrongfully assail us, then is our trust doubled.

3 *Have mercy, &c.*] Again he flees to God's mercy: for the word מִן signifies as much as *to do a man a pleasure*, as if he should say he brings no deserving of his own, but humbly craves deliverance from the sole mercy of God. When he says *he cries daily*, it is a witness of the hope and affiance that we spoke of a little before; and by the word *cry* is denoted earnestness, as I have told you oftentimes already. For although the saints do not always make their prayers with a loud voice, yet do their secret sighs echo upward, and mount from their hearts even to heaven. Therewith also he joins perseverance, that we may know that he was not discouraged at the first or second brunt, but continued his prayers with tireless zeal. In the next verse he expresses more precisely to what end he besought God to be merciful to him; namely, that he might be rid of his sorrow. And in the second member he declares that there is no feigning in his cry, because he lifts up his soul unto God, which is the great characteristic of proper prayer.

5 *For thou, O Lord, &c.*] He confirms the whole former doctrine from the nature of God; because it were in vain for the afflicted to resort to him, and to mount up into heaven with their prayers, except they were persuaded that he is a faithful rewarder of all that call upon him. It is on this that David now leans; that God is bountiful and inclined to compassion, and that his mercy is so great that he cannot reject any that call upon him for help. And where he calls God *gracious* or *placable*, it is a species of his goodness. For it were not enough that he were in general *good*, unless he should also bear with sinners, which is understood by the word סלח. And though he commend the manifoldness of God's loving-kindness, yet does he presently restrain that commendation to the faithful that call upon him, that we may know that they justly perish in their miseries, who, neglecting God, stubbornly chafe upon the bit. But yet therewith he says *all*, so that every man without exception,

from the greatest to the least, may be bold to resort to God for mercy.

6 *O Lord, hearken, &c.*] As in this verse and the next he fervently repeats his requests, he shews himself to have been tortured with no light grief, and also to have been agitated with no ordinary anxiety. And by this example we are taught that they are too cold or inconstant who, after getting through one prayer, give over if God grant not their desire forthwith. Neither is the repetition vain whereby the faithful discharge their cares into God's bosom; and this importunateness is a sacrifice of sweet smell before God. When he says, *God will hear me when I cry unto him in the day of trouble*, he applies to his own peculiar use what he said just now; that is, that God is merciful and easy to be entreated towards all that call upon him.

8 Among the gods there is none like thee, O Lord; nor any that can do as thou doest.

9 All the nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thy face, O Lord; and shall give glory to thy name.

10 For thou art great, and thou art the only God that workest wonderful things.

11 Shew me thy ways, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth; knit my heart unto thee to fear thy name.

8 *Among the gods, &c.*] Either he bursts out into thanksgivings after he had obtained his desire, or else he gathers courage and new strength to pray; which latter notion pleases me best, unless perhaps one desire to comprehend them both. Some understand the word *אלהים* to be spoken of *angels*, as if David should compare them with the most high God, but it seems not to square well with this passage. For he calls not the angels to order as inferior gods, that they should give place to God's power; but in way of disdain he pours scorn on all counterfeit gods, in whom the unbelievers thought there was some help, because they prove not themselves to be gods by their works. For if he should distribute the power of working between them in different degrees, he would not challenge that wholly for God which is his own. Therefore he denies that there is any godhead to be found in them in very deed and in effect. And in calling us back to their works, he shews sufficiently that they do but deceive with worthless puerilities, who reason curiously like philosophers about God's secret being, and pass over the

manifest marks in which his majesty is brightly reflected. Inasmuch then as our understanding may not reach to the height of God, David contenting himself discreetly with the witness of his works, avouches that they are all but counterfeit gods, who put forth no power. If any object that it is against reason for God to be compared with empty forgeries, it is easy to be answered, that his talk is accommodated to the unskilfulness of the common sort. For we know how boldly the superstitious advance the fond devices of their own brain above the skies. And David most justly mocks at their madness for forging gods to themselves without any warrant.

9 *All the nations, &c.*] If any man choose to restrain this to the present case, he may for me. And surely David often, by such titles of commendation, enhances the gracious goodness that he had tasted of. Nevertheless we may fitly extend it to God's universal power. But whether he treat of the grace that was bestowed upon himself alone, or of God's works in general, we must bear in mind, as I have said heretofore, that as often as he speaks of the prevalence of godliness among the heathen, he has an eye to the kingdom of Christ, before whose coming God did but give some initial foretastes of the manifestation of his glory, which at length was spread over the whole world by the voice of the Gospel. Neither was David ignorant of the calling of the Gentiles; but as by reason of the strangeness thereof, it would have grated upon the ears of the Jews that the Gentiles should come to worship God together with the children of Abraham, and become partakers with them of the heavenly doctrine, all distinction being removed; to soften the matter, he says that the heathen also *were created by God*; so that it ought not to seem at all against reason, if they also, being enlightened, should at length acknowledge him their maker and architect. And again in the next verse he repeats the said cause, namely, that God's glory is known by the *greatness of his works*, which is the true way to learn godliness. For although the pride of the flesh desires always to wing its way into heaven, yet as our understandings fail us in so long an investigation, nothing is better for us than, according to the small measure of our infirmity, to seek God in his works which bear witness of him. Wherefore let us learn to waken up our understandings to reflect upon God's works, and let us leave the presumptuous to wander in their own labyrinths, the end whereof will always be an inextricable abyss. Howbeit, lest we might be dissatisfied with this restraint, David mightily extols God's works by the title of *wonderful*, though in the eyes of blind

and besotted persons they have no attractions. Meanwhile, this is to be noted for a principle, that the glory of *godhead* agrees not with any but the only one God, because neither the wisdom, nor the might, nor the righteousness, nor aught else of the heavenly operation that shines forth in his wonderful works, is to be found anywhere else. Whence it follows that the papists, as much as in them lies, deny the true godhead, while bereaving God of his attributes they leave him but a bare name.

11 *Shew me, &c.*] Now David mounts up higher, that he may be ruled with the spirit of sound understanding to live holy, and be strengthened with the spirit of manliness in this purpose. And he tacitly contrasts God's ways with all counsels which he might take of fleshly reason. For in submitting himself to God, imploring him to be his guide, he confesses that there is no other method of framing our life aright, than for him to lead us, and for us to follow him; and accordingly, that they are led away into error who depart never so little from the law to the wisdom of their own brain. And this he confirms further by adding immediately, *I will walk in thy truth*: for he pronounces all guilty of vanity and lying that hold not to this rule of truth. Furthermore, he desires not to be taught in God's ways as though he had been utterly ignorant of all doctrine before, but as he knew himself to be still wrapped in many mists of ignorance, he laboured to profit further. Also it is to be noted that he speaks not only of the outward manner of teaching; but as he had the law before his eyes, he craves the inward light of the Holy Ghost, that he might not labour unprofitably in learning the letter; as he says in another place, *Open thou mine eyes, and I will consider the wondrous things in thy law*; Ps. cxix. 18. Now if a prophet so great, and gifted with such ample endowments of the Spirit, nevertheless confesses his own ignorance from the heart, what madness were it for us not to feel our own want, that the knowledge of our own slender stock may spur us on to get more! And truly, the more a man has profited in the doctrine of godliness, the better perceiveth he that he is far from the mark. Secondly, it is to be added that reading or hearing is not enough, except God enlighten us inwardly with his Spirit. Besides this, he desires to have his heart framed to the obedience of God, and to have it steadfastly established therein. For as our mind has need of light, so has our will of direction. Others translate it, *Cheer up my heart*, as though the verb were derived from the root *חרה*. But it is rather derived from *יחד*, which signifies *to unite* or *knit*, which sense agrees very well with

the present place. For there is an implied antithesis, which was not so well observed as it should have been, between the steady purpose with which the heart of man cleaves to God when it is ruled by the Holy Ghost, and the restlessness with which it frets, and is tossed hither and thither, so long as it fluctuates amidst its own affections. Therefore, after the faithful have learned what is right, then must a resolute consent be added, lest the heart should break out into unhallowed lusts. And therefore there is a most apt metaphor in the word *knit*, by which we gather that man's heart is full of tumult, torn by conflicting impulses, and scattered about as it were in fragments, until God, gathering it to himself, hold it together in a state of firm and uniform obedience. Hereby also it is manifest what our freewill is able to do of itself. For whereas there are but two powers belonging to it, David confesses himself to be destitute of both; setting the light of the Holy Ghost against the blindness of his own mind, and affirming that uprightness of heart is the unqualified gift of God.

12 I will praise thee, O Lord God, with all my heart; and I will glorify thy name for ever.

13 For great hath thy mercy been towards me; and thou hast delivered me from the lower grave.

14 O God, the proud are risen up against me, and the companies of the mighty have sought my soul, and have not set thee before their eyes.

15 And thou, O Lord, art a merciful God, and forward to forgive: far from wrath, and much in mercy and truth.

16 Look back to me, and pity me: give thy strength to thy servant, and save the son of thy handmaid.

17 Shew some token of goodness upon me; and mine adversaries shall see it, and be ashamed; because thou, O Lord, hast helped me, and comforted me.

12 *I will praise thee, &c.*] He promises thankfulness to God when he shall have found him in all his ways a beneficent father. And as he desires to have his heart knit to God to fear him, even so he says he will publish his praises not only with his mouth or his tongue, but also with earnest affection of heart, yea, and that constantly. Afterwards he adds the cause, for that God had shewed a rare and notable

token of mercy in delivering him. And that he may place in a stronger light the greatness of this benefit, he terms the dangers from which he was saved, *the lower grave*; as if he should say he had not been held down with one death only, but thrust down into the uttermost depths of the grave, so that it behoved him to have God's hand stretched out to him wonderfully. Now seeing we are delivered out of a still deeper abyss of death by the grace of Christ, our unthankfulness will be inexcusable, except every one of us exercise himself in commending this deliverance to the uttermost of his power. For if David advanced God's name so greatly for prolonging his life for a short time, what praises deserve this incomparable redemption, whereby we are translated from hell to heaven! The papists strive to elicit their doctrine of purgatory from hence, as though that were the upper hell; but their argument is vile beyond conception, and needs no refutation.

14 *O God, the proud, &c.*] Others read *וְרִים*, which signifies *strangers*. And truly, by this word the scripture often denotes hideous barbarity, as if it should term them cruel. Nevertheless, I had rather follow that which is more received. For as the Hebrews call proud men *וְרִים*, it is likely that by reason of the likeness, the letter *ו* was turned into the letter *ר*. And by this means the text will flow better; for immediately after he calls those *strong* or *sturdy* who ran upon him with headlong impetuosity and fierceness to destroy him, even as we know there is nothing of moderation where pride reigns. And he expresses that without figure, which he had spoken just now concerning the grave. For considering that he was as a lamb in the midst of wolves, he had been quickly swallowed up if God had not, by miracle, delivered him as it were out of the midst of death. He denotes the utmost excess of cruelty, when he says they had no regard of God. For unless the fear of God restrain us, and the feeling of his judgment, the fury of our lust, to dare anything, is portentous. Moreover, he seeks remedy for these mischiefs from God's mercy. For as he forthwith glides off to these titles of commendation, *Thou, O Lord my God, merciful, &c.*, it is the same as if he said, There is defence enough for us, against the boldness and outrage of the ungodly, in the goodness, mercy, and faithfulness of God. It may be also that as he was sensible that the ungodly are scourges of God, he set God's mercy before him to assuage the excess of fear. For this is the true, great, and only comfort, that although God chastise us, yet he forgetteth not his mercy. And it is well enough known that this sentence is taken out of Exod. xxxiv. 6,

where there is a most remarkable description of the nature of God. First he is called *merciful*; then ensueth *forwardness to pity*, namely, when he sympathises with us in our distresses; thirdly is added *his forbearing*, because he is not angry so soon as he is wronged, but of his loving-kindness beareth with us; and finally he is said to be *manifest in mercy and truth*, by which words I understand him to be continually gracious and true. Now although he is no less commendable for his rigour than for his mercy, yet as he is not rigorous but through our wilful stubbornness, as though he were compelled to punish, the scripture by setting him forth as merciful and pitiful by nature, gives us to understand that it is but accidental if he is at any time rigorous and severe. It is true I speak improperly and grossly; but yet this title of commendation whereby the nature of God is described, tends to this end, that God is of his own nature so gracious and ready to forgive, that he dissembleth and delayeth punishment, and never addresseth himself to revenge, unless compelled by our maliciousness. Why God's truthfulness is joined with his mercy, I have told heretofore. For as even those that are most kind-hearted could sometimes desire to retract, when they have promised a thing, because it repenteth them of their facility, we, who are wont absurdly to measure God by our own ells, distrust his promises. God therefore avoucheth himself to be unlike men, because he is no less consistent with himself in performing largely whatsoever he hath promised, than he is in promising liberally.

16 *Look back to me, &c.*] He applies more plainly to his present use what he had said concerning God's mercy and goodness. For as God is merciful he trusts that he will have regard of his welfare. Afterwards follows the word *חנן*, which signifies *to do one a pleasure*, and is referred to gratuitous aid. Finally, he concludes that he cannot be preserved but by the aid of God obtained by prayer: whereby he confesses that he has no power within himself. In calling himself *his servant and the son of his handmaid*, he boasts not of his own obedience, but seeks to obtain greater favour from the long line of his ancestors, and the continual course of God's grace; as if he should say he is one of God's household, and his servant born, even from his mother's womb; of which thing we have spoken already elsewhere. And in the last verse he confirms again that he was in a manner forsaken of God. For he would not have desired any sign of God's favour, unless he had been on all sides driven to despair, and God's favour hidden, to try his patience. Surely it was a proof of no common

steadfastness, to wrestle in suchwise with this temptation, that he ceased not to descry light in darkness. And he desires *to have his enemies put to shame*, because they incessantly assailed his simplicity with scoffs and jeers, as though he had done foolishly to trust in God.

PSALM LXXXVII.

Forasmuch as the miserable and sorrowful state of the church, such as it was after the captivity of Babylon, might well weaken the minds of the godly, here the Holy Ghost promiseth a wonderful and incredible restitution of it, so that nothing may be more desirable than to be accounted a member of the same.

[*A Psalm or Song of the Sons of Korah.*]

1 His foundations are in the holy hills.

2 The Lord loveth the gates of Sion above all the dwellings of Jacob.

3 Glorious things are spoken of thee, O thou city of God. Selah.

As long as the children of this world are in prosperity, we see how well satisfied they are with their estate, and how mightily they extol it with proud contempt of the church; yea, and even though they are quelled by adversity, yet do they not discard this delirious confidence. In the mean time, they recklessly despise religion and the worship of God, because being besotted with pleasures, riches, and the glitter of honour, they fancy themselves happy without God. And truly, it often happens that the Lord pampereth them with all kinds of good things, purposing in the end to lay rightful and ripe punishment upon them for their unthankfulness; but presseth his church with sundry and sore miseries, or at least holdeth it down in degraded and low state, so that it may think itself miserable, or at least be subject to the contempt of others. Therefore, lest this shadowy appearance might deceive the faithful, it is worth while for them to be called back to another consideration, that they may believe that true which is said in Ps. xxxiii. 12; *Happy are the people that have the Lord for their God*. Then let the summary of this Psalm be, that the church of God singly excels all the kingdoms and polities of the world, because God watcheth over the welfare of it, and ruleth it with his government; first, that among the fierce commotions and horrible storms wherewith the whole

world is shaken from time to time, it may continue safe: and secondly, and that chiefly, that being wonderfully preserved by the defence of the same God, at length, after long warfare, it may attain the prize of its high calling. It is a singular benefit of God, and at the same time a notable miracle, that amid the various revolutions of the kingdoms of the earth, spreading his church abroad continually from age to age, he protecteth it from destruction, so that it alone endureth for ever in the world. But, because oftentimes, when the wicked swim in wealth, and flourish in riches and authority, it is seen that the afflicted church is tossed amid sundry dangers, or rather overwhelmed with innumerable shipwrecks; the happiness of it must be determined to consist chiefly in this, that it hath an everlasting state reserved for it in heaven. Furthermore, the circumstance of the time in which this Psalm was compiled, makes not a little to clear up the meaning. For though the people were returned from the Babylonish captivity, the church of God gathered together, and grown again into one body after their long dispersing, the temple and altar of God standing, and the service of God restored; yet, because of so huge a multitude of men there remained but a small portion, and that which was left was daily diminished by the enemies, and the state of the church was become low and obscure, and the temple far inferior in beauty and goodness to what it was before, there was scarce any cause why the faithful should hope well of the future. Certainly, that they should be advanced again to their former estate from whence they were fallen, seemed impossible. Wherefore it was to be feared lest the minds of the godly, being oppressed both with the remembrance of the overthrow already received, and with the hugeness of their present miseries, might faint, and finally sink into despair. That they should not quail in such sore adversities, the Lord not only promiseth them recovery of that which they had lost, but also lifteth them up to hope of incomparable glory, according to that prophecy of Haggai, ii. 10, *The glory of the second temple shall be greater than the glory of the first*. Now, last of all, it remains that we learn to apply this Psalm to our use also. This comfort ought to have weighed so much with the godly of that age, that they should not only have stood erect in their adversities, but also have reached out of the grave to heaven. At this day, seeing we know that all has been fulfilled that was foretold by the Spirit, we are over and above unthankful, if the experience of the fathers added to his words, confirm not our faith more. For it cannot be sufficiently expressed according to the worthiness thereof,

how gloriously Christ beautified the church by his coming. For then the true religion, which erst had been shut up within the narrow bounds of Judah, was spread abroad into the whole world. Then God, who had been known but by one family, began to be called upon by divers tongues of all nations. Then the world, which had been miserably torn in pieces with innumerable sects of superstition and error, grew together into a holy unity of faith. Then all men, vying with each other, flocked to the company of the Jews, whom they abhorred before. The kings of the earth and their people yielded themselves willingly to the yoke of Christ; wolves and lions were turned into lambs; the gifts of the Holy Ghost were poured out upon the faithful, gifts that far excel all the glory, all the beauty, and all the riches of the world; the body itself of the church was wonderfully preserved, increased, and gathered out of countries far removed from each other. The incredible propagation of the Gospel was combined with a success altogether as signal. Therefore, although the renown of the church had not been blazoned by this prophecy, yet doth the excellent and incomparable state of that golden age openly shew it to be the very heavenly kingdom of God. Nevertheless it was requisite, that the faithful should, even then also, have a deeper consideration in esteeming the excellence of the church, than fleshly reason could yield. For at what time it flourished most, it glittered not with purple, gold, and precious stones, but with the blood of martyrs. Rich in the Spirit, yet was she nevertheless poor and destitute of earthly goods. Beautiful and glorious as she was for her holiness before God and his angels, yet was she contemptible before the world. Without, were many and avowed enemies, either cruelly raging against her, or by indirect wiles practising the worst they could against her; within, were alarms and treachery. In a word, as yet, her dignity, adorable indeed, being of a spiritual character, lay hid beneath the cross of Christ. And therefore the consolation that is contained in this Psalm would well have served that time also, because it would have cheered the hearts of the faithful to see the church in more perfect state than it had been before. But the case stands otherwise with us. For it is come to pass, in like manner, by the default of our fathers, that that same excellent beauty of the church hath lain in loathsomeness and deformity, under the feet of the ungodly. And at this day, crushed by the weight of our sins, it groans under miserable desolation, under scornful reproaches of the devil and the world, under cruelty of tyrants, and under the shameful slanders of her enemies;

so that the children of this world, that wish to be in good case, desire nothing less than to be accounted among the people of God. Whereby it is the better seen how profitable this Psalm is, and how needful it is to be always thought upon. The title denotes not so much the authors of the Psalm, as the chief chanters to whom it was committed to be sung. Nevertheless, it may be that some Levite of the same race also compiled it.

1 *His foundations*, &c.] As the relative is masculine, in my judgment they are deceived that take it to be meant of Jerusalem, as though it should be said to be founded *upon the holy hills*. And I am not ignorant in what manner some learned men defend it, that is, that the name of the people is to be supplied, although it be the chief city that is spoken of. But how constrained an exposition that is, all see, though I hold my peace. Some Hebrews have thought nothing more likely than that it is referred to the Psalm itself. And so they metaphorically expound the word *foundations* to be meant of the ground or theme that the Psalm treats of, because it speaks of the holy city Jerusalem, which was situate upon hills. And I marvel that they were deceived in a thing so easy and manifest. For as it is a common thing among the Hebrews to put a relative without its antecedent, it ought to seem to them no harsh manner of speaking. But, a little after, there follows the name of God. And we know that Jerusalem is said everywhere to be founded by him. By *the hills* some understand Moriah and Sion, which were the two tops of a cleft mountain; but it is overstrained. Rather, since the country was mountainous, the prophet denoted the several neighbouring hills forming a chain around Jerusalem, as we shall see in another place that Jerusalem hath hills round about it, Psalm cxxv. 2. The simple and native meaning then is, that God chose the hills whereon to set his city. For, a little after, there follows in the text, *the Most High himself shall establish her*. Truly he is the founder of other cities also, yet is it not read that he says of any other city, *This is my resting-place for ever: here will I dwell; for I have chosen it*, Psalm cxxxii. 14. This difference is always to be remembered, that whereas other foreign cities were founded by the guidance and power of God only for civil government's sake, Jerusalem was his peculiar sanctuary, and his royal seat. After the same manner also speaks Isaiah, xiv. 32. Besides this, whereas God had sanctified all Judah, he is said to have rejected all other cities, and to have taken this one to himself to reign in. For here the question is not about earthly polity, but spiritual government, because then pure religion, and the legitimate worship of

God, and the doctrine of godliness, were nowhere to be found but in Jerusalem. Which is expressed in the second verse, *The Lord loveth the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*. Whereby we are taught that all the excellence of the holy city depended upon God's free election. Whereto agrees that which is written, Psalm lxxviii. 60, that God rejected Shiloh, the tribe of Ephraim, and the tabernacle of Joseph, to dwell in Sion, which he loved. The prophet therefore notes the cause why God preferred that one place before the rest. And he determines it to be not the worthiness of the place, but the free love of God. Wherefore, if it be demanded why and wherefore Jerusalem had the pre-eminence, let this short answer suffice, BECAUSE IT SO PLEASED GOD. And this was the beginning of God's love; and the end of it was, that there might be some place determinate, wherein the true religion might be kept up, to nurse the unity of faith, until the coming of Christ, and from whence it might flow afterwards into all regions of the world. The prophet therefore gives this title of commendation to Jerusalem, that God was the master builder and protector of it. Moreover, whatsoever excellence it has above other places, he ascribes to God's favour and adoption. In putting *Sion* for Jerusalem, and the *gates* for the whole compass of the city, there is a twofold synecdoche.

3 *Glorious things, &c.*] Word for word it is, *That which is spoken in thee, are glorious things*. We must consider the prophet's purpose, or rather, to what the Spirit of God, who speaketh by the mouth of the prophet, hath respect. Whereas the state of the whole people was at a low ebb and despised, many and sore enemies pressed hard upon them, few had heart enough to overcome the obstacles, some new and unlooked-for change sprang up daily, and there being danger lest things gradually sinking more and more into decay, should at length fall in ruins; under all these circumstances, it could scarce be hoped that the holy city should be restored. And lest the hearts of the faithful, being vanquished with despair, might faint, here is an adequate support put under them, namely, that the Lord hath spoken otherwise of the future state of it. For it is not to be doubted but they are called back from the present aspect of things to the promises which put them in hope of incredible glory. Therefore although there appear nothing that is to be greatly rejoiced at, yet does the prophet bid the children of God encourage themselves by the word, and stand as it were in a watch-tower, to wait patiently for the things that are promised. In this manner the faithful were warned, first, to give heed to the ancient prophecies, and to bear them in mind,

especially those that are written in Isaiah, from the fortieth chapter to the end of the book; and secondly, to give ear to God's servants, that were then preaching of Christ's kingdom; whence it follows that there can no right judgment be given of the happiness of the church, saving when we estimate it according to God's word.

4 I will make mention of Rahab and Babel among the knowers of me: behold, the Philistines, and Tyrus, with Ethiopia: there is he born.

5 And of Sion it shall be said, Man, and man is born in her; and the Most High himself shall establish her.

6 The Lord shall count, when he writeth the people: he was born there.

4 *I will make, &c.*] The name of Rahab is taken in many other places of the scripture for Egypt, and that signification squares with this place very well. For the prophet purposes to write of that royal majesty of the church which as yet was laid up in hope. He says, therefore, that those who heretofore were deadly enemies, or utter strangers, shall not only become familiar friends, but also be ingrafted into one body, so that they shall be accounted for citizens of Jerusalem. In the first member he says, *I will reckon up Egypt and Babylon among my household*. And in the second member he adds, the Philistines, Tyrians, and Ethiopians, who hitherto have been so much at variance with God's people, shall now agree as well with them as if they were Jews born. What a glorious distinction of the church, that even they that despised her shall come flocking to her on all sides, and they who could have found in their hearts to have had her cut up and destroyed, shall think it the greatest honour that can be to be and to be accounted her citizens. They shall all of them renounce their own countries in which they prided themselves heretofore. Wheresoever born, whether Egypt, or Palestine, or Tyre, they shall profess themselves citizens of the holy city. The Hebrews expounded this passage thus: that there shall come very few out of other nations that shall excel either in wit or virtue, but there shall be great store of them in Israel. There shall, say they, be scarce here a man and there a man worthy of praise among the Tyrians, Egyptians, Ethiopians, or any other nation, so that if there be any such, he may be pointed at with the finger for the rarity of the thing; but *in Sion, man, and man*

shall be born; that is to say, there shall be great store of such men. The Christians almost all with one consent, refer it to Christ, and are of opinion that there is rendered a cause why those are now to be numbered among the citizens of Jerusalem who hitherto had been aliens, yea and bitter enemies; and that because Christ shall be born there, whose office it is to gather together into the unity of faith and hope of eternal life them that were dispersed, as it were members torn from the body. The first exposition being altogether forced, needs no refutation. Again; it is apparent enough that the Jews, actuated by a stolid ambition, wrest this place as if on purpose. As for that which the Christians allege, although plausible at the first blush from its ingenuity, yet has it no solidity in it, and the prophet's words are clear, that what country soever men are of, they shall willingly renounce it to be enrolled in the register of the elect people. For he puts not *born* for such as are bred in the country, but for such as are citizens. What is added afterwards, *the Most High shall establish her*, it will be as fitly translated *shall order her*; namely, because God governeth his church in a special manner with his word.

5 *And it shall be said, &c.*] He continues the same proposition, namely, that new citizens shall be gathered into God's church out of divers parts of the world. Still he uses another figure, that strangers born were reputed among the holy people, precisely as if they had been of the lineage of Abraham. The Chaldeans and Egyptians shall be added to the household of the church; and the Ethiopians, Philistines, and Tyrians shall give in their names among the natural children. Now by way of confirmation he adds that the multitude of the new progeny shall be exceeding great, so that the city which had been for a time uninhabited, and afterwards also scarce half filled with a small number of men, should be crowded with a huge multitude of people. The same thing that is promised here briefly, is described in many words by Isaiah, liv. 1; *Rejoice, thou barren, that barest no children; for she that was desolate hath more children than she that is married: set out thy tents wider, stretch out thy cords, and fasten well thy pins, &c.* Also, *thy children shall come from far, lift up thine eyes round about thee, all these shall be gathered unto thee.* And in xlv. 5, there is in a manner the same language, or at least which comes very near to what is written here: *This man shall say I am the Lord's; that man shall call in the name of Israel; this man shall write with his own hand, I am the Lord's, and that man shall name himself by the name of Israel.* Neither is it without good reason that by the word *born* the prophet

signifies that the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and such like, shall be of the flock of God's people. For although they were not born in Sion by nature, but were to be grafted into the body of the holy people by adoption, yet as the very passage into the church is a second birth, this manner of speech is used with great propriety. For Christ weds the faithful to him upon condition both that they should forget their own people and their father's house, Ps. xlv. 11, and also that being formed into new creatures, and born again of incorruptible seed, they should begin to be children as well of God as of the church, Gal. iv. 19. And truly we are not otherwise born again to the heavenly life than by the ministry of the church. By the way we must remember the difference that the apostle puts between the earthly Jerusalem (which being a bondwoman beareth children to thralldom) and the heavenly Jerusalem which beareth free children by the Gospel. In the second part of the verse is expressed her long continuance: for it often happens that the sooner cities rise to distinguished eminence, the shorter is the continuance of their prosperity. Now lest the prosperity of the church may be thought transitory after this sort, the prophet avouches that she shall be established by the Lord; as if he should say, It is no marvel though other cities totter, and be subject from time to time to sundry vicissitudes, because they roll on with the world, and have not everlasting keepers. But the case of the new Jerusalem shall be the reverse, whose perpetuity, being founded upon the power of God, shall continue even when heaven and earth fall into ruin.

6 *The Lord shall, &c.*] The prophet means that the name of Sion shall be so famous that all men shall most desirously sue to be admitted into the number and estate of her citizens. For he speaks of a most honourable lot: as if he should say, At such time as God shall take account of the nations which he shall vouchsafe to honour above all others, he shall write them as belonging to Sion rather than to Babylon or any other cities; for to be a commoner among the citizens of Sion shall be a more valued distinction than to hold the highest rank anywhere else. Notwithstanding, he instructs us at the same time from whence these aliens have suddenly so great honour, that is, from the favour of God. And assuredly, those that are the bondslaves of Satan and sin, shall never purchase the right of citizenship in the heavenly city by their own efforts. It is only the Lord that severeth people into their respective ranks as he thinketh good, and distinguisheth one from another, since all men are alike of themselves. The description whereof mention is made here,

pertains to calling: for although he wrote his children in the book of life before the creation of the world, yet doth he then finally register them in the roll of those that are his, when having regenerated them by the Spirit of adoption, he giveth them his cognizance to be known by.

7 And the singers as the players upon instruments :
all my springs are in thee.

7 *And the singers, &c.*] Partly the concise brevity of the sentence, and partly the ambiguity of one word, makes the meaning obscure. That the word *springs* is taken metaphorically in this place, is not controverted; but yet the interpreters vary in explaining the metaphor. Some interpret it to betoken *hope* or *trust*, some *affections*, and others *thoughts*; I would willingly subscribe to the opinion of those that translate it *ditties*, if the idiom of the tongue would admit it. But as that might seem too far-fetched, I embrace that which is most agreeable to reason; namely, that *lookings* are denoted; as if it had been said, I will always look earnestly unto thee as it were with mine eyes fastened upon thee: for the root of the word signifies *an eye*. And now must we see what is meant by that other member, *The singers as the players upon instruments*. It is indeed an abrupt form of expression, but the meaning is well enough agreed upon among all men; namely, that there shall be so great cause of joy, that God's praises shall resound there continually, as well with lively voice as with musical instruments. Therefore he confirms what he had spoken before of the glorious restoration of Sion: for by the greatness of the joy and the manifold harmony of praises, he shews how great the happiness of it will be. But meanwhile he describes the end of all the gifts wherewith God endoweth his church so liberally; namely, that the faithful should with hymns and songs testify their thankfulness towards him. Others translate חללים, *who dance to music*, or *beat the ground with the foot*. But it is a matter of no great moment, as it is enough to know this, that there shall be a continual concert of God's prayers in the church and a mutual succession of singing when he shall have set forth the treasures of his grace. Moreover the prophet shews that he embraces God's church with singular love, care, and goodwill, that by his own example he may encourage and incite all the godly to the same zeal, according to this saying of the Psalmist, Ps. cxxxvii. 5, *Let my right hand be forgotten if I remember not thee, O Jerusalem, in the beginning of*

my mirth: for then truly are all our affections settled on the church, when being gathered in from wandering and vain seductions, and setting light by all honours, delights, riches, and pomps of the world, they are contented with the spiritual glory of Christ's kingdom alone.

PSALM LXXXVIII.

Although this Psalm contain the bitterest complaints of a man most piteously afflicted, and almost at the point of despair, yet does the prophet therewith declare the invincible steadfastness of his faith by wrestling against sorrow, inasmuch as even out of the deep darkness of death he nevertheless cries upon God to deliver him.

[*A Song or Psalm of the Sons of Korah. To the chief chanter upon Mahalath, 'To make humble.' An Instruction of Heman, the Ezraite.*]

2 O Lord God of my welfare, I cry day and night before thee.

3 Let my prayer come into thy sight: bow down thine ear to my cry;

4 For my soul is cloyed with miseries, and my life draweth near unto the grave.

5 I have been reckoned with them that go down into the grave: I have been as a man without strength:

6 Free among the dead, as the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more, and which are cut off from thine hand.

[*A Song or Psalm, &c.*] It is likely that this Heman, whose name is here superscribed, is the same of whom mention is made in the sacred history, 1 Kings, iv. 31, where in the commendation of Solomon's wisdom he is compared with Ethan, Heman, Chalcol, and Darda: and therefore it is no marvel though he was the author of this Psalm, being a man that excelled in the spirit of wisdom. Some translate the portion על מחלת, *upon the infirmity*: but, according to the ordinary application, it is likely that it denotes either some instrument of music or the beginning of some song. Of the other words I have spoken enough elsewhere. Moreover, it is requisite to bear in mind that in the person of

one man there is set before our eyes a mirror both of rare affliction and also patience. For God exercised not his servant, whom he had adorned with such excellent gifts, that he might be an example to others, to his own behoof only; but he purposed to present common matter of instruction to all his people. To which intent also Heman, as it were mounting on a stage, calls the whole church to witness as well his infirmities as his faith and steadfastness. For it is greatly to our behoof to look upon this renowned servant of God, who excelled in singular gifts of the Spirit, overwhelmed with so great a burden of miseries, that he complains piteously that he differs nothing from a dead man, that our miseries being however sore, should not overwhelm us with despair; or if at any time anguish, care, grief, sorrow or fear, enfeeble us, that we should not therefore despond, especially as we see that the holy prophet emerges from the depth of darkness into the light of good hope, not without forcing himself to the uttermost. But rather we must assure ourselves, that by the mouth of Heman the Spirit of God enditeth a form of praying whereby he inviteth to him all that are past hope of recovery.

2 *O Lord God, &c.*] It is to be noted, as I told you just now, that although the prophet simply, and without hyperbole, recites the torments of the sorrows and griefs that he suffered, yet he endited a form of prayer for such as are afflicted, lest they should faint under any anguish of adversity. And though by reason of the grievousness of his miseries he will burst out by and by into vehement complaints, yet does he seasonably fortify himself with a short preface, lest, being carried away with the heat of his affection, he might rather clamour against God, and chide with him, than humbly sue for pardon. For by terming him the God of his salvation, he does, as it were, by casting a bridle upon his own head, restrain the excess of his sorrow, shut the gate against despair, and also fortify and frame himself to the endurance of the cross. By his crying out, and importunity, he shews how earnestly intent he was on praying. It may indeed be that he did not distend his throat and yell, but yet he uses the word *cry* not without cause, to denote his earnest effort. To the same purpose pertains his perseverance, when he says he continued *days and nights*. Neither is the portion, *before thee*, superfluous; because, although all men commonly make complaint in their heaviness, yet are they far from pouring out their sighs before God: nay rather, the greater part seek concealment wherein they murmur against God, and accuse him of over severity. Others pour forth their cries to the air aimlessly: whereby

we gather that it is a point of rare virtue to set God before our eyes so as to direct our prayers to him.

4 *For my soul, &c.*] In these words the prophet excuses the excess of his grief; as if he should say it is not from a craven spirit or delicacy that he is so clamorous, but if his case be well considered, he is justly driven to make moan by the immense accumulation of his miseries. Neither alleges he some one kind of miseries only; but he says that they were added one after another, so that his heart was cloyed with sorrow till it could no more. Again he expresses specifically that his life was not far off from the grave: but this also he exaggerates further in the next verse, where he complains that he was as it were killed. For although he breathed as other men do, yet the number of deaths that hung over his head were so many graves, into which he looked to be swallowed up every hour; and he seems to put the word נבר, which is so termed from *manliness*, rather than the word *man*, that he might the better shew that the grievousness of his miseries was so great as might have broken the stoutest man's heart in the world.

6 *Free among the dead, &c.*] The prophet meant to express something greater and more grievous than common death. First, he says he was free among the dead, because he was unfit for all the duties of life, and as it were banished the world. For this subtle device of Austin's, that Christ is said to be free among the dead because he obtained victory by singular privilege, so that death could have no power over him, has no connection with the meaning of the prophet. The prophet says rather, that he is discharged from the service of this present life, and engages his mind no more with any care, because his miseries have made him past all feeling. Afterwards, comparing himself with the wounded, he bewails himself as being in worse case than if, weakened with diseases, he were going down to death by little and little; because we naturally more abhor violent death. More harsh seemingly is that he adds, *that he is forgotten of God, and is cut off from his hand, or guardianship*, whereas it is certain that the dead are no less under God's protection than the living. Yea, even that prodigal Balaam, whose purpose was to turn light into darkness, was nevertheless constrained to cry out, *May my soul die the death of the righteous*; Num. xxiii. 10. Therefore it might seem to be the saying of a heathen man that God is no longer mindful of the man that is dead. Answer may be given that the prophet speaks according to the understanding of the common sort, even as the scripture also, when God's providence is treated of, accommodates its style to the

visible state of the world, because we mount not up to the life to come, which is hidden, but by degrees. Nevertheless, I think that the prophet spoke rather according to the disordered conceptions of a man in misery, than regarded what the rude and unskilful surmise; neither is it any marvel that a man endued with God's Spirit, was as it were amazed when sorrow overmatched him, so that he let slip some words unadvisedly. For although in their greatest troubles the servants of God have this faith firmly settled in them, that God hath a care both of the quick and the dead; yet doth sorrow oftentimes so overcloud their minds that they perceive not God's presence at the moment. In the complaints of Job, one may often find that when the minds of the godly are pre-occupied with sorrow, they pierce not immediately to God's providence, which notwithstanding they have well bethought them of before, and bear engraven in their hearts. Therefore, though the prophet were persuaded that the dead also are under God's protection, yet in the first paroxysm of his grief, he spoke not so advisedly as became him, because the light of faith was dimmed, which soon after shone forth again, as we shall see. And this is a thing most useful to observe, that if temptations weaken us, we should nevertheless not despond.

7 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkneses, and in the deeps.

8 Thine indignation lieth heavy upon me, and thou hast vexed me with all thy waves.

9 Thou hast put away mine acquaintance from me; and made me to be abhorred of them: I am shut up, that I cannot get forth.

10 Mine eye acheth by reason of mine afflictions: Lord, I call upon thee; I stretch out my hands unto thee.

7 *Thou hast laid me, &c.*] Now he acknowledges more distinctly that whatsoever adversity he endures, proceeds from the hand of God. Neither, assuredly, will any man flee to God earnestly to seek relief at his hand, who is not already persuaded that he is stricken by his hand, and that nothing happens by chance. And it is to be marked that the nearer he approaches to God, the more his grief is exasperated, because nothing is more dreadful to the saints than God's judgment. Others translate it, *Thine indignation is approached upon me*, and so is the word סמך taken sometimes.

But the circumstance of the place compels me to take it here, as in many other places, for *to compass* or *beset about*, or *lean upon*. For seeing he treats of a man sunk down into a treble grave, it were too unimpassioned to say that the same doth approach. But the translation I have followed answers very well to the context; namely, that the prophet should say he bears the whole burden of God's wrath, because he is beaten down with the waves of it. Now seeing so horrible a flood prevented not the prophet from lifting up his heart and prayers to God, we may learn by his example to cast the anchor of faith and prayer into heaven in all our shipwrecks.

9 *Thou hast put away, &c.*] Whereas the prophet was bereft of all man's help, he ascribes that also unto God's displeasure, in whose hand it is either to bow men's hearts to gentleness, or to make them fierce; which is a point worthy to be noted, for unless we bear in mind that the reason why we are left destitute of worldly helps is because God withdraweth his hand, we agitate ourselves without end or measure. And truly with good right may we complain of men's unkindness or cruelty, as often as they shall withdraw their just courtesy from us; but yet shall it nothing profit us to do so, except there be added this knowledge, that because God is displeased with us he taketh away the succours that he had appointed for us, even as also he can easily, when he list, procure us the favour of all men, that they shall stretch out their hand to do us good. Also he adds yet a more grievous thing, that his friends abhorred him; and finally, he concludes that there is no way for him to get out of his miseries.

10 *Mine eye acheth, &c.*] Lest we might imagine the prophet to be steel-hearted, he tells us again that his afflictions were so severe and painful that there were manifest traces of his sorrow even in his countenance and eyes. Whereby we gather how low he was cast down. But by the way, he avouches that he was not drawn from God as many are, who fretting secretly with themselves, and chafing upon the bit, as the proverb says, resolve to do anything rather than to disburden their cares upon God, that they may fetch comfort at his hand. In speaking of *the stretching out of his hands*, he puts the sign of the thing for the thing itself. And I have told you elsewhere to what purpose this ceremony serves, which has been generally used in all ages.

11 Wilt thou do a miracle to the dead? or shall the dead rise and praise thee? Selah.

12 Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave? or thy truthfulness in destruction?

13 Shall thy wondrous works be acknowledged in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

14 But unto thee have I cried, O Lord; and early in the morning shall my prayer come before thee.

11 *Wilt thou, &c.*] He means by these words that if God make not haste to help, he shall not come in time, because there is scarce anything betwixt him and death, and therefore if God will help him, this is the critical juncture, for after this the opportunity will cease. He demands, therefore, how long God will delay, and whether he will raise the dead by miracle. Now although the prophet speak not of the last resurrection, which shall surpass all other miracles, yet he cannot be acquitted of going too far, as it becomes not us to prescribe to God at what time he shall bring help. For we wrong his power if we believe not that it is as easy for him to restore life to the dead, as in due time to encounter and prevent the danger that is to come. And surely, constant as the saints were, they always retained some smack of the infirmity of the flesh, so that it was needful for God's fatherly loving-kindness to bear with the faultiness that adhered even to their very virtues. When he demands *whether God's goodness shall be recorded in the grave*, he means not that the dead are devoid of sense, but he proceeds with that which he had said before, namely, that the time serves better to help men while they are yet crying in danger, than to raise them up when they be dead and buried. And he reasons after the ordinary manner of men, because God is not wont to bring men out of their graves to be witnesses and publishers of his goodness. Also he annexes God's truthfulness to his mercy. For as often as God delivereth his servants, he proveth himself to be faithful in his promises. And again, nothing leads him to promise, but his own goodness alone. Now then, whereas the prophet says that as well God's goodness, as his truthfulness, might, and righteousness, are not known in the land of forgetfulness, deluded persons wrest it improperly to support a gross error, as though men were annihilated by death. For he speaks but only of the ordinary manner of helping, because it was God's will that this world should be as a stage, whereon to shew the gracious goodness he vouchsafeth mankind.

14 *But unto thee, &c.*] Although there may have been some intemperateness in the prophet's expressions, which I have confessed to be faulty, yet was it a token of rare faith and godliness that he never failed in his zeal for praying. For in this sense does he say that *he hied him apace betimes in the morning*, lest we might think he lingered dilatorily and coldly till utter necessity constrained him. And he modestly gives us to understand, by these words, that it came not to pass by his own slothfulness that he pined away in long-continued miseries, as though he had not sought God. And it is an example especially worthy to be noted, that our hearts fail us not, if at any time our prayers happen to want success, though hearty and constant.

15 Lord, why wilt thou reject my soul, and hide thy face from me?

16 I a wretch, and always dying from my childhood, have endured thy terrors with doubting.

17 Thine indignations have gone over mine head; and the fear of thee hath cut me off.

18 They have enclosed me about daily like water, they have girded me about together.

19 Both friend and companion hast thou put away from me: mine acquaintance are darkness.

15 *Lord, why wilt thou, &c.*] Though these complaints at the first sight have the appearance of sorrow without any comfort, yet contain they tacit prayers. For he does not wrangle insolently with God, but sues mournfully for redress of his miseries. And this kind of complaint is well worthy to be reckoned among the unutterable groanings whereof Paul makes mention, Rom. viii. 26. For truly, had the prophet thought he had been rejected and abhorred, he would not have persevered in praying. But here he sets forth the fleshly understanding, against which he wrestled manfully, that it might at length by the effect appear that he had not prayed in vain. Therefore, though this Psalm be not closed with thanksgiving, but ends with a pitiful complaint, as though there remained no room for grace, yet is it so much the more profitable to retain us in the duty of praying. For doubtless, when the prophet discharges these sighs into God's lap, he ceased not to hope for the help which he saw not. For he invoked him not as the God of his salvation at the first, to warrant himself nothing at his

hand afterwards. Why he should say he *had always been at the point of death from his childhood*, is uncertain, save that one may reasonably guess that he had been sundry ways put to sore trial, as though his life had hung by a thread amidst divers tremblings and fears. Whereby also we gather, that God's indignations and terrors, of which he speaks in the same breath, were not of short continuance, which he expresses by the word *daily*. Now, then, as nothing is more dreadful than to conceive that God is displeased with us, he has good reason to compare his distress to a flood: and hence also comes his doubting. For it could not be but that the feeling of God's displeasure vexed his mind with sore disquietude. But here it is demanded how this vacillation may agree with faith; and truly, whensoever any man hovers in perplexity and doubt, or rather is tossed to and fro, his faith seems to be swallowed up. Nevertheless, experience teaches us, that while it fluctuates under these impulses yet it rises again from time to time so as not to be drowned; and if at any time it happen to be stifled, yet it is cherished in secret, because though the surges swell never so high, yet it wards them off with this shield, that God continueth faithful so as never to disappoint or forsake those that are his.

PSALM LXXXIX.

The prophet, (whosoever he was that was author of this Psalm,) intending to make supplication to God for the afflicted church, sets down the covenant that God had made with David as a ground of good hope for himself and the residue to stand upon. Afterwards he commends in general the power of God, which is seen in the whole governance of the world. From thence he comes down to the memorial of the deliverance, wherein God had given an everlasting specimen of his fatherly love towards his chosen people. Then returns he again to the covenant made with David, wherein God had promised to be always favourable to the people for the king's sake. Lastly, he adds a complaint, that God having as it were forgotten his covenant, did both give over his church to the lust of their enemies, and shewed not any help or comfort in its mournful desolation.

[*An Instruction of Ethan, the Ezraite.*]

1 I will sing the mercies of the Lord for ever:
with my mouth will I commend thy truth from generation to generation.

2 For I said, Mercy shall be set up for ever: thou shalt establish the heavens, thy truth is in them.

3 I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto my servant David.

4 I will establish thy seed for ever and ever, and I will build up thy throne from age to age. Selah.

An Instruction of Ethan, &c.] Who this Ethan might be to whom this Psalm is ascribed, to me is not quite clear: for if I should say he were one of the four to whom Solomon is compared for the excellence of his wisdom, 1 Kings, iv. 31, the matter will not square with his time: unless perhaps he continued alive after Solomon, and bewailed the heavy and sorrowful division that happened at that time, which was a prelude of future ruin: for though the realm, being then divided into two parts, stood yet undestroyed; still, as that division severed the unity established by God, what hope could there remain? Besides this, the welfare of the whole body depended upon the one head, from which the ten tribes were wickedly fallen away. And verily, what a horrible portent it was to see that kingdom defaced and miserably rent asunder immediately after one man's time, which might have flourished unscathed even to the end of the world! Who would not have thought that oracle deceiving and vain, the truth of which was destroyed in so short a time? Therefore, if any one like to have the said Ethan to be the author of this Psalm, he must refer his complaints to that time in which not only the throne of David was impaired, but also the greater part of the people were gone away from God, and brothers began to murder each other in mutual and intestine discord. And truly in a doubtful case I see nothing more likely: for as for them that will have the people to be forewarned of their miseries to come by the spirit of prophecy, they are easily refuted by the very context, where the writer, whosoever he was, expressly bewails the alteration that happened by the rebellion of Jeroboam.

1 *I will sing the, &c.*] You must bear in mind, as I observed just now, that he opens with the praises of God and the memorial of his covenant, that the faithful may fortify their faith against the formidable engines of temptations. For when we gird ourselves to prayer, if despair meet with us at the very portal, we must break in by force and violence, lest our hearts faint and utterly quail. Therefore, the prophet's purpose was to fortify the minds of the godly, in the very vestibule, with steady and substantial

supports, that through trust of God's promise, which was, to outward appearance, in a manner fallen to the ground, they might drive back all the engines of temptations wherewith their faith was sore shaken, and not doubt to hope for the restitution of the kingdom, but pray steadfastly for the same. Although then, from the sorrowful spectacle of decay, Ethan might according to fleshly reason conjecture that he and the rest of the faithful were beguiled, yet he says he will now commend God's mercies, which at that time were hidden. And as it was not easy for him to acknowledge God to be merciful, whom he found to be severe and rigorous; that the riches and variety of God's grace may subdue this temptation, he sets before him God's goodnesses in the plural number.

2 *For I said, &c.*] He assigns the cause why he continues in praising God in adversities; namely, because it is not even God's sharp chastisement of his servants that can make him despair of his loving-kindness towards them. For no man will open his mouth freely to praise God, but he that is fully persuaded that God never layeth aside his fatherly affection towards his children, no not even when he is angry with them. For this *saying*, whereof he makes mention, is as much as to have it thoroughly fixed and rooted in his heart; as if he should say, whatsoever has befallen him heretofore, yet hath it not put away his hope of God's gracious favour in time to come, but he will abide always in the same mind. And it is to be noted, that it was not without an arduous encounter that the prophet did by faith embrace God's goodness, which at that time was utterly vanished out of sight; to the intent that if God at any time withdraw all the signs of his love from us, we may learn nevertheless to settle in our hearts the everlasting setting up of God's mercy which is treated of here: by which metaphor the prophet means that God's mercy shall be spread abroad or continue till it come to its end or full accomplishment. In the second member somewhat must be supplied: for the effect of it is this; that there shall be no less steadfastness in God's promises, than in the settled course of the heavens, which is eternal and free from all change. And by the word *heavens*, I understand not only the visible skies, but also the heavens that are above the whole frame of the world: for here God's truth is placed above the elements of the world, in the heavenly glory of his kingdom.

3 *I have made, &c.*] That he may the better confirm himself and all the godly in the belief of God's promise, he fetches authority from the person of God, whom he brings in speaking. For as faith must depend upon God's mouth,

there is the more weight and force in this manner of speaking, when God himself cometh forth and allureth us by his own voice. And seeing that he in thiswise preventeth us, there can be no charge of rashness if we press boldly to him; even as on the contrary part, it is not lawful for us to presume anything upon God's grace without his word, or to hope at our own pleasure, for anything that he hath not promised. Moreover the promise is rendered more authentic by this, that God declareth with an oath that he hath made a covenant with his servant David. For as in old time leagues and covenants were wont to be engraved on tables of brass, he useth a metaphor taken from the same. And he adorneth David with two titles, calling him both *his chosen* and *his servant*. For they that draw the former title to Abraham, do not sufficiently observe the common manner of speaking, wherein one thing is repeated twice. Furthermore he is called *chosen*, because God of his own mere goodwill preferred him, not only before the posterity of Saul, and so many notable men, but also even before his own brothers. Therefore, if the cause or original of the covenant be sought for, we must needs have recourse to God's election. The name of *servant*, which follows immediately after, must not make men think that David earned anything by his own merits; but he is called God's servant in respect of his royal estate, because he thrust not himself into that place rashly, but undertook the government offered him by God, by the warrant of his lawful calling. Moreover, by the effect of the covenant, we gather that the prophet has not applied the same things to the use of himself and of the whole people without cause; inasmuch as God made not the covenant with David individually, but had an eye to the whole body of the church in all ages to come. For although that this saying, *I will establish thy throne for ever*, must in part be understood of Solomon and the rest of David's successors, yet did the prophet know that the substantial everlastingness could not be found but in Christ. And surely in making one man king, God respected not that one house alone, setting aside and neglecting the people with whom he had made his covenant before in the hand of Abraham, but he bestowed the sovereignty upon David and his children, that they should reign for the common weal of them all, until the throne might be truly established by the coming of Christ.

5 And the heavens shall praise thy miracle, O Lord;
yea even thy truth in the congregation of the saints.

6 For who shall be equal to the Lord in the clouds, or be like to the Lord among the sons of the gods?

7 God is very terrible in the congregation of the saints, and to be feared above all that are about him.

8 O Lord God of hosts, who is strong like thee, O God? and thy truth is round about thee.

5 *And the heavens, &c.*] The prophet having spoken of God's covenant, even as faith must take his beginning at the word, comes down now to the general commendation of his works. Nevertheless, it is to be noted that the prophet treats not of God's wonderful power to any other end than that the sanctity of the covenant might be more clearly shewn. For he cries out that this is the God who ought to be served and feared, whom men ought to believe, and upon whose power men may lean safely. And therefore the word *miracle* which he sets down in the first place, I willingly restrain to the power which he manifesteth in preserving his church. True it is that the heavens are excellent witnesses and setters forth of God's wonderful power, nevertheless it will appear by the sequel that all his titles of commendation are levelled at the mark I spoke of. For in my judgment some interpreters do well to understand by the word *heavens* the angels, which are glad and rejoice at the common welfare of the church as well as we. And that does the latter member confirm, where he says that *God's truth is to be preached in the congregation of the saints*. For it is not to be doubted but that he continues the same sentence here also, and by the name of *truth* advances the notable deliverances by which God had kept faith with his servants.

6 *For who shall be, &c.*] Now the prophet illustrates further that which he had spoken of God's wonders, and cries out emphatically, *Who is he in the clouds that can be compared to God?* And he names *the cloud* or *heaven*, because it is no marvel that there is nothing to be found upon earth which may come near to God's glory. For though man excel other living things, yet do we see how miserable and abject his state is, or rather how full of shame and reproach it is. Whence it follows, that under heaven there is no excellence which may compare with God. But when we climb into heaven, then, being ravished with wondering, we imagine a rabble of gods, which did away with the true godhead. And the latter member expounds the first, where the prophet denies that there is any among the sons of the gods, that is like the true and one God. For

whereas some by the *clouds* or *heavens*, understand the sun, moon, and stars, it is disproved by the context itself. The effect then is, that the one God reigneth over all, and without peer, even in the very heavens themselves. And he calls the angels the sons of God, because they neither have had their beginning from the earth, nor are clothed with a corruptible body, but are heavenly spirits endued with the divine glory. Not that they are any part of God's being or substance, as brainsick persons dream, but because God sheweth forth his power in them, is their nature distinguished from ours by this title. The effect therefore is, that although there shine forth a greater majesty in the angels than in other creatures, which ravishes us with admiration while we contemplate them, yet come they not near to God, that they should dim his glory with their excellence, or share the sovereignty with him. Which is to be marked advisedly, because though God everywhere avoucheth the angels to be but servants, and ready at his command, yet the world being not contented with the one God, forges to itself many god-heads. Hereto also pertains the next verse, where the prophet says *that God is terrible in the congregation of the saints*. For he corrects that devilish superstition, whereunto almost all men are given, when they extol angels without measure or reason. But if the very angels themselves tremble and are afraid before the majesty of God, why should they not be accounted as subjects, that God alone may have the sovereignty entirely to himself. Moreover by placing them *about God*, he means that they stand about his throne after the manner of body-guards, and are always ready at hand to execute his behests. Afterwards he repeats the same thing again, *who is strong like thee*, that at least for very fear we may learn not to rob him of his due honour. However, lest he might put us into too much fear, he mingles somewhat of sweetness with it, saying that *his truth is to be seen round about him on all sides*; as if he should say, God is always as good as his word, and whatever changes happen, yet doth he continue true both before and behind, both on the right hand and on the left.

9 Thou reignest over the pride of the sea: when the waves thereof arise thou stillest them.

10 Thou hast smitten Egypt down, as a wounded man: in the arm of thy strength hast thou scattered thine enemies.

11 The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: thou hast made the world, and the fulness thereof.

12 Thou hast created the north and the south :
Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.

13 Thou hast an arm of might : thou shalt
strengthen thine hand, thou shalt lift up thy right
hand.

14 Righteousness and judgment are the place of thy
throne : mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

9 *Thou reignest, &c.*] I have already said that the things which the prophet has hitherto spoken generally concerning God's power, must be referred to the miracle of delivering the Israelites out of Egypt, which he sets forth now in express terms. For though some interpret it that the waves of the sea are stilled, because God suffereth not the whole world to be overflowed with a deluge; yet reading both these verses jointly, I think the prophet speaks of the Red sea, which God stilled to make way for his people to pass. For he adds immediately after, that *all Egypt was overthrown as a man that is slain*. By which words he commends God's gracious goodness in delivering his church. For there is no doubt but he set God's fatherly love before himself and others, that he might repair the more freely to him; even as in avouching that *God had broken his enemies in pieces with his mighty arm*, he gathers mental knowledge by experience, that he can do the same again as often as he list.

11 *The heavens are, &c.*] The third time he repeats that the same God that had delivered his chosen people, ruleth the whole world with his word. For from creation he gathers, that God doth actually control whatsoever is done in heaven and earth. For it were against reason that the heavens, being created by God, should now revolve by chance, and that things should be confounded upon earth, either at the pleasure of men, or by chance and casualty, considering that it belongeth to God to maintain and defend whatsoever he hath created, lest we might imagine, as heathenish men and worldlings do, that he enjoyeth himself unmoved in the sight of this most beauteous spectacle. In speaking of the south and the north, and also of the mountains of Tabor and Hermon, he accommodates his speech to the understanding of the uninformed herd; as if he should say there is no part of the world which does not reverence and honour the creator thereof. Also I unite the next verse with it, That God's arm is furnished with power, and his hand with strength, and that his right hand obtaineth the highest eminence. For whereas some expound it in the manner of wishing, *strengthen thy hand, and lift up thy right hand,*

it seems too remote from the prophet's meaning, who, to encourage all the godly, simply commends God's inconceivable power and strength.

14 *Righteousness, &c.*] These titles of commendation also make more to the confirmation of hope than if God's strength had been alleged alone. And as often as mention is made of God, it behoves us to set our minds chiefly upon these virtues that build up faith, lest we fondly waste our efforts in curious speculations, wherein foolish men delighting themselves, understand not what God is. The prophet therefore, alluding to the ornaments or pomps of kings, says that righteousness and judgment are the upholders of his throne, whereon he sitteth to be seen of all men, and that mercy and truth are as it were his pursuivants; as if he should say that instead of a robe of state, diadem or sceptre, God is decked with these ornaments; namely, that he is the just and upright judge of the world, a merciful father, and a faithful defender of those that are his. For as earthly kings have no dignity within themselves, they are fain to borrow it elsewhere; but God, who is sufficient of himself, and wanteth no other helps, setteth forth to us the brightness of his image in his own righteousness, mercy, and truth.

15 Blessed is the people that knoweth how to rejoice: O Lord, they shall walk in the brightness of thy countenance.

16 In thy name shall they daily rejoice: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.

17 For thou art the glory of their strength; and in thy favour shall our horn be exalted.

18 For our buckler is of the Lord; and our King is to the Holy One of Israel.

15 *Blessed is the, &c.*] He proceeds with that which he had touched upon concerning the church, not only because the unbelievers are blind to behold God's works, but also because it is the prophet's purpose to put none but the godly in good hope, that they may lean upon God without fear, and not be discouraged for any adversities, but call upon him boldly. And he says they are happy to whom it is given to rejoice in God: for though all men in common are fed with God's bounteousness, yet doth not the feeling of his fatherly goodness come to all men in suchwise that they can persuade themselves to be in his favour, and so

congratulate themselves on their own blessed state. Therefore he vouchsafeth a singular privilege to his elect, in giving them the taste of his goodness, so that they may take heart to rejoice and be glad. And surely nothing is more deplorable than that the unbelievers with brutish insensibility should trample under foot the benefits of God, which they devour greedily: for the more abundantly God pampereth them, the fouler is their unthankfulness. True happiness, therefore, is to apprehend God's goodness, that possessing our hearts with joy, it may stir us up to praise and thanksgiving. Afterwards he proves, by the event, that they are blessed who with delight and gladness acknowledge God to be their father, because they not only enjoy his benefits, but also upon trust of his favour pass the whole course of their life with quiet minds. For *to walk in the light of his countenance*, imports as much as to rest upon his providence because we believe that he hath a peculiar regard of our welfare, and keepeth watch and ward for the same. To the same purpose pertain *the rejoicing in his name*, and *the glorying in his righteousness*. For the effect is, that the faithful find enough in God, yea and more than enough, wherein to rejoice and glory. By the word *daily*, he seems to denote a steady and entire continuance; and thus he indirectly taunts the foolish overweening of such as, being puffed up with nothing but wind, and taking pride in their own strength, lift up their horns aloft. For as they stand upon an ill foundation, they must needs at length fall down. Whence it follows, that there is not true magnanimity nor any power that stands except such as leans upon God's grace. Even as Paul also, Rom. viii. 31, proudly vaunts himself, *If God be on our side, who shall prevail against us?* and scorns all adversities as well present as to come.

17 *For thou art, &c.*] He confirms the same sentence, that is, that God never leaves his faithful servants destitute of strength: for, in terming him *the glory of their strength*, he means that they are always so stayed up with the present help of God, that they may justly glory in him; or, which imports the same, God's power appears always glorious in helping and upholding them. Still, by the way, they are admonished of their duty, that they should yield God the praise of their standing safe and sound. Now, then, if this be truly said of the present life, much more does it apply to the spiritual life of the soul. And that he may the better commend this bounteousness of God, he teaches therewith that it depends only upon his good pleasure. Whence it follows that they are wholly and altogether bound to God,

whose free bounty alone induceth him to continue his help to them.

18 *For our buckler, &c.*] As the people's chief safety was in their king, the prophet gives them especially to understand that it is also the gift of God that the king himself maintains the welfare of the faithful. Nevertheless, it is to be noted, that the prophet was not so fast tied to the temporal and transitory kingdom, but that he at the same time weighed the end also, as we shall see presently. For he knew that it was only in respect of Christ that God's favour flowed from the head into the whole body of the church. And first of all, when he metaphorically terms the king *a buckler*, (according as the scripture uses that figure oftentimes,) yet does he confess that the people are not defended by his hand and working, otherwise than by the power of God. And he repeats the same thing again in the second member, avouching that the king was given by God to govern the people; and, therefore, that the defence which comes from the king is the blessing of God. Now must we bear in mind, that what is spoken of the shadowy kingdom properly applies to the person of Christ, whom the Father hath given to be the maintainer of our welfare, that we may be shielded by his hand.

19 Then spakest thou to thy meek ones in a vision, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.

20 I have sought out David my servant; with the oil of mine holiness have I anointed him:

21 Therefore shall my hand be established with him: doubtless mine arm shall strengthen him.

22 The enemy shall not encroach upon him; neither shall the child of iniquity hurt him.

23 And I will break his oppressors in pieces before his face; and I will strike them that hate him.

19 *Then spakest thou, &c.*] Now declares he more at large wherefore he said that the king of the elect people was given them from heaven for the preservation of the public weal; namely, because he neither was chosen by the voices of men, nor usurped the state of his own head, nor crept in by evil policies, but was elected by God to be the maintainer of the welfare of the whole realm, and performed his duty by the appointment and guidance of the same God.

For it is the purpose of the prophet, as we shall presently see more plainly, to distinguish this heavenly king from all other kings. For though Paul, Rom. xiii. 1, teaches truly that there is no power but from God, yet was there a great difference between David and all earthly kings that have obtained their sovereignty by worldly means. For God had delivered the sceptre to his servant David from hand to hand, and had seated him on the royal throne by his own authority. The particle *is*, which properly signifies *then*, is taken also for *long ago*, or *in time past*. The meaning therefore is, that whereas some are born kings, and succeed their fathers by right of inheritance, and some are made kings by election, and others acquire themselves dominion by violence and force of arms, God was the author of this kingdom because he chose David by his own voice. And although he revealed his purpose to Samuel, yet as the prophet says in the plural number that the same word was uttered unto many, we may gather for a certainty that there were many prophets brought to bear record which should with one consent avouch that David was created king by God's appointment. And surely, as other prophets flourished at that time, it is not likely that so great a matter was concealed from them. Yet is Samuel only named, because he was both the herald of the prophecy, and the minister of the anointing. Moreover, whereas God spake to his prophets in those days either by dream or by visions, here is put but the one kind. Afterwards follows the sum of the prophecy, that God had furnished and fenced the valiant or strong man whom he had chosen to be king. He is called *strong*, not because he excelled in strength of himself, (for he was but of small stature, and least set by of all his brothers, so that even Samuel also passed him over without regard of him,) but because after his election he was endowed with new strength and other princely qualities, even as when Christ chose his apostles, he not only decked them with the title, but therewith also bestowed whatsoever was necessary for the execution of their duty. And even at this day he putteth forth the same power of the Spirit in his ministers. The strength of David then, whereof mention is made here, was the effect of his election, because God, in creating him king, furnished him also with such strength as should suffice for the preservation of the people. Which appears yet more evidently by the second member, where the original of this invincible strength is pointed out to be, because God had chosen him, and exalted him above the people. For all the words are emphatic. For seeing God declareth that he had exalted him, it is to be understood that the state

wherein David lay hid and unknown was but homely and base, before God stretched out his hand to him. To the same effect makes that which follows, *from among the people*. For the meaning is, that he was then but one of the meanest sort of the people, and such a one as bore no countenance of any superiority, since he was the lowest esteemed in a country cottage among herdsmen. In the word *chosen* God calleth us back to his own pleasure, as if he forbade us to search for any other cause than that it so pleased him.

20 *I sought out, &c.*] The prophet confirms the same proposition; namely, that there was no princeliness in David, save that it pleased God to prevent him with his grace. For such is meant by the word *sought out*, as if God should say he took him of his own goodwill. And therefore the name of *servant* denotes not any desert, but is referred to the calling, as if God should establish his sovereignty by his own authority, because if God allow of it no doubt it must be lawful. For his free election is confirmed again in the second member, as the anointing (which David procured not by his own policy, but obtained beyond hope) was the cause of his honour. Seeing then that God of his own accord and mere goodwill preventeth David to anoint him king by the hand of Samuel, he justly avoucheth himself to have *sought him out*. Afterwards he adds that he will be a maintainer of this kingdom, whereof he was the founder, according as he is not wont to leave his works half undone, but with continual proceeding bringeth them to their end.

22 *The enemies shall not, &c.*] He expresseth particularly that although David be not without enemies, yet shall God's power be with him to defend him that he be not oppressed with wrongful violence. He denieth therefore that David shall be tributary to his enemies, as one that is vanquished in battle is constrained to take unequal conditions of peace at his conqueror's hand. By the way, in terming his enemies *the children of iniquity*, he sheweth by implication that his government shall be such an inoffensive kind of government that no man may attempt to overthrow it without wrong and wickedness. The effect is, that David and his posterity shall be preserved and well fenced by the protection of God, so that they shall not be abandoned to the lust of their enemies. And whereas God hath suffered that kingdom to go to wreck, so that David's successors have been fain to pay great tribute to foreign kings, it is not at variance with this promise, because though the power of the kingdom was reduced, yet was it enough that the

root remained still until Christ came, in whose hand the kingdom was at length established. For as both the king and the people had wickedly rejected God's so great blessing, the kingdom was often shaken through their own default, and afterwards diminished, and lastly decayed; yet God ceased not in the meanwhile, (that he might make good his promise concerning the perpetuity of the kingdom,) to cherish and maintain some hope by striving against their unthankfulness. Besides this, in mentioning David's *haters* and *oppressors* by name, he intimateth that this throne shall not be privileged from annoyances and troubles, because it shall always have some deadly enemies if God set not his hand against them.

24 My truth also and my mercy shall be with him : and in my name shall his horn be exalted.

25 I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the running streams.

26 He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my welfare.

27 Yea, I will make him my first-begotten, higher than the kings of the earth.

28 And I will keep my mercy unto him for ever ; and my covenant shall stand fast with him.

29 His seed also will I establish for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.

24 *My truth also, &c.*] He sheweth that he will continue the course of that grace which he promised David at the beginning; for these words import as much as if he had said that to prove himself truthful he will always be gracious. Thus we see that God not only gave a handsel of his goodness to David at the beginning, but also held on still with the same mercifulness. And this has reference to the whole church of Christ, that God's goodness may appear in the whole course of our salvation, and not only at the commencement of it, as the sophists babble. David's throne is taken here for his glory, dignity, and power, and therefore the meaning is, that by God's benefit the state of his kingdom shall always be prosperous and flourishing. And by and by is added the amplitude thereof; for as the people had foreclosed the way of God's blessing by their own sins, their heritage was more restricted than the promise imported. But now God declareth that it shall be enlarged again under David, so that the people shall possess the

whole country from the sea even to Euphrates. Whereby we gather, that what God had promised by Moses was not fulfilled but in the person of David. By the word *streams* we may understand as well Euphrates alone, because it is divided into many channels, as also the neighbouring rivers on the Syrian border.

26 *He shall cry, &c.*] He declareth that the chief excellence of this king shall be, that he shall be accounted the son of God. Now, though God vouchsafeth the same honour to as many as he ordained to be kings, (according as we have seen elsewhere, *I have said, ye be gods, and all of you are children of the Most High*: Psalm lxxxii. 6,) yet in this place he expresseth some singular privilege of the holy king that was chosen by him, meaning that he shall be his son after another sort. And soon after we shall see him placed in a higher degree than worldly kings, although they have larger dominion. Therefore, to be called the son of God, was the prerogative of this king alone in all the world. For else had the apostle, Heb. i. 5, reasoned not only coldly, but absurdly, in avouching Christ to be above the angels, because it is said, *I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son*. Therefore, though the angels, and all kings that are born anew by the Spirit of adoption, are called *God's sons*, yet is David by a singular prerogative exempted from the common sort of kings, when God promiseth to take him for his son: which appears more evidently by the next verse, where he terms him his *first-begotten son*; also, because he is higher than all the kings of the earth, which honour is more excellent than all dignity, as well of men as also of angels. If any one object, that David, being a mortal as well as others, was not equal to the angels, it is easy to answer; If he be considered in himself, he cannot justly be advanced to so high a degree, but as he represents Christ for a time, he may.

28 *And I will keep, &c.*] God oftentimes inculcateth this one point, that he had set up David's kingdom with this condition, that it should be established to the end. Moreover, by putting his *mercy* in the first place, and afterwards adding his *covenant*, he pointeth out the cause of the covenant; as if he should say, in one word, It is of free gift, and it is not only founded upon his mere gracious goodness, but also it continueth in the same. For the effect of the words is this, that God will always be merciful to David, so that his covenant shall never fail. Whence it follows that the inviolability thereof is founded upon God's mere goodwill. In the next verse he expresseth the effect of his *truth*, in that David's posterity shall sit on the royal throne for ever-

more. For as under heaven there is nothing of long continuance, the prophet by the *days of heaven* means an everlasting continuance. Whence it follows, that the effect of his prophecy cannot take place till we come to Christ, in whom alone shall be found this everlastingness.

30 If his children shall forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments;

31 If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments;

32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.

33 But my loving-kindness will I not take from him: neither will I belie my truth.

34 My covenant will I not repeal, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.

35 Once have I sworn in mine holiness, if I lie unto David.

36 His seed shall endure for ever: and his throne as the sun before me.

37 As the moon shall he be established for evermore, and *as* a faithful witness in the heaven. Selah.

30 *If his children, &c.*] The prophet proceeds yet further, that although David's posterity should sin, yet had God promised to be merciful to them, so that he would not punish their transgression with extreme rigour. However, that the promise might be the more effectual, he always introduces God speaking, as if he were dealing with him according to the precise words of the covenant. And it was a very necessary addition, because unless God of his infinite loving-kindness pardon us, we are so slippery and prone to continual falling of ourselves, that no covenant of his will continue firm and steadfast with us. Therefore, as God saw it could not be, but that the posterity of David, so far as it depended upon themselves, would from time to time fall from the covenant through their own default, he hath added this exception to be for a remedy. Nevertheless, because it is advantageous for men to be chastised with God's corrections, God promiseth not to let them escape unpunished, that they might be encouraged in their sins; but he promiseth a fatherly mitigation of their punishments, so that he will not execute vengeance with extreme rigour. And he promiseth forgiveness not only to light faults, but also to

grievous sins. For it is not for nought that he useth these forms of speech, *to forsake his law, to break his statutes, not to walk in his judgments, and not to keep his commandments*. Neither is it for nought that he hath put their *transgression* or *false-heartedness*, and *iniquity*. Therefore, the forbearance and lenity of God, whereby he reconcileth to him the posterity of David, extended even to the most grievous offences. Moreover, this passage shews that when men are adopted by God, they do not forthwith lay aside the flesh with the faults thereof, as enthusiasts surmise that as soon as we are grafted into the body of Christ, all the corruption that is in us must be done away with. Truly would God we could forthwith alter our disposition, so that this angelic perfection which they exact might flourish in us! But as it is manifest that we are far short of it as long as we carry this flesh about us, let us take our leave of that devilish figment, and let us all flee to the common sanctuary of forgiveness. For surely God speaketh of the household of his church, when in promising pardon to their offences he avoucheth that they shall be guilty of revolting from him. Now, to restrain that to the people of old time which is spoken here, is not only stupid but impious. First, I take that for granted which has been often seen before; namely, that that kingdom was set up for a shadow, whereby God might represent the Mediator to his church. And this is not only proved by the witness of Christ and his apostles, but also assuredly and evidently gathered from the matter itself. For set Christ aside, and where is the everlastingness of the throne that is spoken of? For the next successor to David, save one, being bereft of the most part of the kingdom, out of twelve tribes retained scarce one tribe and a half. Furthermore, with how many misfortunes was the slender kingdom defaced afterwards, till at length both the king and the people were led into thralldom to their utter shame and reproach! And where was the dignity of the throne, when the king's sons were put to death before his face, and he himself received sentence of death? 2 Kings, xxv. 7. When afterwards the Jews were by sufferance allowed to dwell in their own country, it was without the honour and title of a kingdom. Therefore Ezekiel, xxi. 27, avouches thrice that the crown shall be overturned till he come that hath the right to it. It follows, then, that the everlasting state of the kingdom rests only in the person of Christ. And truly, what would the Jews have had to do with God in old time, or we also at this time, if the Mediator were not a means to bring us into his favour? Now, therefore, the qualities of the kingdom which we have

spoken of must be applied to ourselves. For as the everlastingness thereof leads us to the hope of a blessed immortality, and the invincible strength thereof calms our minds, and suffers not our faith to shrink, whatsoever Satan practises, or however many forms of death beset us; so also the pardon that is promised belongs to Christ's spiritual kingdom, even as it is equally to be gathered from this place, that the welfare of the church rests only in the mere gracious goodness and faithfulness of God. If any one object that those who are regenerated by God's Spirit never utterly fall away, because the incorruptible seed abides in them, I confess it to be most true. Neither is there an utter falling away denoted here, so that there should remain no godliness at all. But because it happens sometimes that the faithful do so shake off the yoke, as that the fear of God may seem to be extinguished in them, therefore it was needful that forgiveness of heinous offences should be promised also, lest every such fall might overwhelm them with despair. So David seemed to outward appearance to be bereft of the Holy Ghost, whom he desires to be restored to him. This is the reason why God leaveth hope of forgiveness even to foul and deadly transgression; namely, lest the heinousness of any offences might keep us back, or hinder us from seeking atonement. Whereby also is confuted the over-severity of the old fathers, who made a conscience to receive again to repentance such as had fallen twice or thrice. For though heed be to be taken that forbearance do not give encouragement to vice, yet is there no less danger in overmuch rigour. By the way it is to be noted, that when God saith he will be merciful to offenders that have broken his law, and transgressed his commandments, he employeth those odious terms on purpose to make us hate and abhor these vices, and not to allure us to sinning. We must consider, indeed, that this is the general purport; that although the faithful are not fully answerable to God's grace, and therefore deserve to be cast off, yet God will be favourable to them, because remission of sins is coupled with his covenant. And certainly, as God exacteth more of us in his law than we are able to perform, all that he hath promised there is void of effect and in vain. Whence Paul, Rom. iv. 14, has this saying, *If the inheritance come by the law, then is faith vain, and the promise is disannulled.* Whereto also pertains this saying of Jeremiah, xxxi. 31, 32, 33, and 34; *I will make a covenant with you, not such a one as I made with your fathers, which they brake presently: but the covenant which I will make with you shall be this; I will write my laws in their hearts, and I will be merciful to their sins.*

Nevertheless, as God adopteth us not that we should sin unpunished, here is intermingled chastisement, whereby God sheweth that he hateth sin, and putting his children in mind of what they have deserved, allureth and exhorteth them to amendment. Therefore, between indulgence, which is an allurement to sin, and extreme rigour, which throws headlong into destruction, the mean is fatherly chastisement, which operates as medicine. And the prophet touches here the prophecy that is written, 2 Sam. vii. 14, where God saith *he will chastise the faithful after the manner of men*: either because the anger of the father in correcting his children springs from love, inasmuch as otherwise he would ill consult for their welfare; or else there is an antithesis between him and men: as if he should say he would be indulgent and gentle, because if he should put out his strength he would out of hand bring us to nothing, with the mere motion of one of his fingers. Both the passages tend to this, that as often as God punisheth, there shall always be a wholesome temperament; and therefore it is right we should refer whatever punishments he inflicts to this use, that they may be so many medicines. And in this behalf the papists have blundered shamefully. For as the true end and fruit of chastisements was unknown to them, they imagined that God revenged himself of sinners. Whence grew their satisfactions, and out of these again grew their pardons, wherewith they went about to ransom themselves. But God's purpose is but to reform the vices of his children, that when he hath thoroughly purged them he may take them into his favour again; according as Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 33, teaches that the faithful are chastised, lest they should be condemned with this world. And therefore, lest he might overwhelm them with the weight of punishment, he slacketh his hand, and beareth with their weakness. Thus is this promise fulfilled, *that his mercy is not taken away from the faithful when he is angry*, because he ceaseth not to love those whom he will have corrected for their own welfare. Nevertheless, the alteration of the person in the words is to be noted: for, after he hath said, *If his children shall forsake my law*, and so forth, in the end he addeth, *I will not take away my mercy or loving-kindness from him*. Surely he ought to have said *them* in the plural number, of whom he had spoken before. But the prophet seems to have done it purposely, to teach us that we are not reconciled to God but in respect of Christ, and that mercy is to be sought for from out of that fountain. What follows after all, *I will not belie my truth*, expresses somewhat more than if he had said that God will be true in his sayings. For it

may happen that God's promises want effect, and yet that he abideth faithful still. The law is true and holy, and yet what profiteth it that salvation is promised us by the same, seeing no man can attain it thereby? God therefore in this place leadeth us further; promising that his covenant shall be effectual and of full force, not only because he will be true to his word, but also because he will withhold his faithful ones, that they fall not away by their own vanity.

34 *My covenant, &c.*] As the true knowledge of God's mercy cannot be conceived elsewhere than from his word, he biddeth us to keep our thoughts fixed on his covenant. For the more excellent and inestimable a benefit it is never to be cast away after we are once adopted, so much the harder is it to be believed. And we know what manifold doubts are wont to steal upon us from time to time. Therefore that the faithful should not too carefully and immoderately debate with themselves, whether they stand in God's favour or not, they are enjoined to look to the covenant, and to embrace the salvation that is offered them there. God, then, commendeth his own faithfulness that his promise alone might suffice us, and that we should not seek for the certainty of our salvation anywhere else. And because he had said, *If David's children shall break my laws; alluding now to the same breach, he saith he will not requite them like for like:* as if he had said, Although the faithful answered not their vocation in all points as they ought to do, yet would he not suffer that the covenant should be disannulled for their default, because the remedy of his gracious pardon shall come in promptly to prevent it. For he pursueth the former proposition, *I will not belie my truth;* not only promising to keep faith with them on his own behalf, (as the saying is,) but also that what he hath promised, shall stand firm, whatsoever impediment men cast in the way: for he will strive with their sins that the effect of his goodness may come to them. And certainly, when the Jews estranged themselves from God by their own unthankfulness and treachery, yet was not the covenant disannulled which was grounded upon his immoveable steadfastness. Yea, and at this day, when our sins mount even into the heavens, God's goodness, surmounting the heavens, overmatcheth them.

35 *Once have I, &c.*] Now God warranteth with an oath, what before he said he had promised to David; whereby it appears that it was a thing of no light importance. For God would not lightly interpose his holy name. At the same time, it is a token of rare loving mercy, that whereas he seeth us prone to distrust, he preventeth us so compassion-

ately. So much the less therefore are we able to excuse ourselves, if we embrace not with unwavering faith the promise that is so well assured, considering that God, for love of our welfare, spareth not his own name because he will have us devoted to his word. For lest his single promise might suffice us, he hath added the oath as it were in lieu of a pledge. The adverb *once*, denotes that the oath cannot be revoked, and that there is no variableness to be feared. And he saith he hath sworn by his own holiness, because a greater than himself is not to be found to swear by. For when we swear by him, we make him our judge, and give him sovereignty over us, according as he is our sovereign by nature. But it is a more forcible manner of speech to say, *by his holiness*, than to say, *by himself*, not only because it sets forth his glory, but also because it is far more fit for the confirmation of faith, in that he calleth back the faithful to God's earthly habitation which he had chosen for himself, that he might not be far off to them that seek him. For I doubt not but that by this term *holiness*, he denoteth the sanctuary, and yet he sweareth not otherwise than by himself; because in naming the temple wherein he resteth, he departeth not from himself; but merely accommodating himself to our unskilfulness, sweareth by his holiness which dwells visibly upon earth. As for the elliptical form of the oath, we have seen elsewhere that it was common with the Hebrews. And so were they warned that the name of God must be used advisedly, lest they might rashly and boldly bring damnation on themselves. For the broken and hesitating manner of speech was as good as a bridle to withhold them. And it is no new thing for God to borrow somewhat from the common custom of men.

36 *His seed shall, &c.*] Now ensues the promise that the right of sovereignty shall always abide with the posterity of David. For he joineth two things together; namely, his offspring and his throne, by which words is promised the everlastingness of the kingdom, in suchwise that it should not at any time pass to aliens. The sun and moon are cited for witnesses, because though they are subject to corruption, yet have they more stability in them than the earth or air, since that we see the elements are subject to continual changes. Therefore because its own motion continually changes the whole world, the steadier state is propounded in the sun and the moon, lest David's kingdom might be esteemed according to the common order of nature. Furthermore, seeing that the royal throne was shaken under Rehoboam, as we have said a little before, and afterwards pulled down and overthrown, it follows that this promise

cannot be restrained to David. For neither did the sun cease to shine by day, nor the moon by night, although the outward pomp of the kingdom were abolished without hope of restitution. Therefore, till it be come to Christ, God might seem deceitful in his promises. But this branch that is sprung out of the root of Jesse, shews in very deed that there was perfect faith kept in these promises.

38 But thou hast abhorred us and put us back, thou hast been angry with thine anointed.

39 Thou hast made the covenant of thy servant to cease; thou hast unhallowed his crown down to the ground.

40 Thou hast broken down all his walls; thou hast put his fortresses to the breach.

41 All that go by the way have spoiled him; he hath been a jesting-stock to his neighbour.

42 Thou hast exalted the right hand of his oppressors; thou hast made all his adversaries rejoice.

43 Yea, thou hast blunted the strength of his sword, and thou hast not made him to stand in battle.

44 Thou hast wiped away his gloriousness, and pulled his throne down to the ground:

45 Thou hast shortened the days of his youth; thou hast covered him with shame.

38 *But thou hast, &c.*] Here the prophet complains that the promise appeared not to be faithful, because the state of the kingdom was decayed. Not that he goes about to accuse God of untruth, but that he may unceremoniously cast his cares and griefs into God's bosom, according as he giveth us leave to deal with him familiarly. For though it be meet we should frame our desires according to his pleasure, yet doth not he pass his bounds who humbly bewails that he is bereft of the signs of God's grace and favour, provided he do not despair or stubbornly murmur against him, even as we shall see hereafter. He adds a testimony of his quiet obedience, whereby he corrects or mitigates his complaints when he blesses God in the end of the Psalm. Therefore, whoever that rabbin was that denied it to be lawful for this Psalm to be rehearsed, with a foolish and impious rigour he condemned what God beareth within his children. For this liberty of expostulating which the

prophet uses, tends not to any other end than to resist mis-giving and impatience by unburdening himself before God. And when he says, *Thou hast abhorred us, and put us back*; if one should examine it according to the strict rule of the Greek or Latin tongue, it would be far more absurd, because the thing that is grievous is put foremost, and then that which is the lighter. But as the Hebrews observe not our degrees, there is no absurdity at all in this order. In the third word there is a rendering of a cause, for the prophet means that the king is cast off, because God is angry with him. Some are of opinion that here are recited the mockings of the enemies, and that, to avoid the stumbling-block which the aforesaid rabbin could not away with in this uncouth manner of speaking. But it is to be considered that the prophet speaks according to the common apprehension of men, and yet he was well assured in himself that he who was once chosen could not be cast off again. To the same purpose also makes that which follows concerning the annihilation of the covenant. For he arraigns not God of levity and inconstancy, but only laments that those not able things which we have seen promised, were, to outward seeming, come to nought. For surely as often as the faithful demand, *How long wilt thou sleep?* and also, *How long wilt thou forget us?* they charge not God with sleeping or with forgetfulness; but they lay open the temptations which flesh and blood suggest that God might speedily succour the infirmity wherewith they are distressed. And therefore it is no marvel though the prophet in such horrible distraction was affected by the feelings of humanity when he said that what God had promised was far from being manifestly realized. For he was not so steel-hearted that when he saw all things contrary to God's promise, he was not moved with that sorrowful and confused sight. But by stepping forth freely into God's presence, he seeks a remedy that he might not be swallowed up with sorrow, which would have happened if he had chafed upon the bit within himself, and neglected this relief. That which he adds forthwith concerning the casting of the crown to the ground, seems not to apply to the time of Rehoboam, unless perhaps the rending of the kingdom may be termed a casting down of the crown. But the things that follow afterwards must needs be referred to a greater misfortune, except one take them hyperbolically. If this seem good, Ethan, who was one of the four sages mentioned in the holy story, 3 Kings, iv. 31, will not be the author of this Psalm. Wherefore, in so doubtful a case, let every one be free to choose the conjecture which appears to him probable.

40 *Thou hast broken down, &c.*] Although the prophet could easily have imputed the breaking down and razing of the fortifications to some other cause, yet does he piously and holily acknowledge God to be the author of it; for he always holds to this principle, that the kingdom which God had set up could not have been destroyed at the pleasure of men unless he had been angry. Afterwards in metaphorical language he bewails that it was exposed as a prey to all wayfarers, as if the hedge of a field, or the pale of a garden should be plucked down, and the ground laid open to depredation. The thing that of itself was grievous more than enough, he aggravates by another indignity, saying, *he is a jesting-stock to his neighbours*. For there is no doubt but worldlings frowardly scoffed at him when they had gotten so plausible an occasion, saying, Is this that king of God's choosing, more excellent than the angels, whose throne should continue as long as the sun or moon endures? Now as these railings redounded upon God, the prophet justly bewails the reproachful scorning of the Messiah, whose dignity was established by heavenly anointing. Afterwards he adds, that God took part with his enemies, because he knew well enough that his enemies could not have prevailed but by the will of God, who furnisheth some with strength and courage, and maketh others weak and faint-hearted. In a word, as many misfortunes as had happened, so many signs of God's alienation he concludes that there are; under whose favour the whole world, practise what it could, was not able to impair the stability of that kingdom. For if he had said his enemies had gotten the upperhand, it had been true indeed, but it had been a somewhat uncertain way to advance the puissance of God; as if men, setting themselves against God, had by their own might forced their way through his guardian power. But now he weighs with himself, that the miserable affliction of that kingdom which God had set up, happened not but through the displeasure of God.

45 *Thou hast shortened, &c.*] Some expound it thus; Lord, thou hast weakened our king so that he is withered away in the first flower of youth, and waxed old before he came to man's estate. Which exposition though it be allowable, yet that the prophet's meaning may appear to us the more evidently, it is to be considered that he speaks not of any one man alone, but compares the state of the kingdom to human life. His complaint therefore tends to this; that God hath made the kingdom wax old, and finally to decay, before it could come to its full ripeness; just as if a violent death should take away a young man before his time, while

as yet gathering strength. And it is an apt similitude; for if a man have an eye to the promise, the kingdom had scarce yet fully bloomed, when during its first advances it was suddenly defaced with a sore decay, and at length vanished away. Moreover we must bear in mind what we said erewhile; namely, that when the prophet finds fault with God's promises for not falling out accordingly, he does not however charge God with untruth, but alleges this contrariety to another end and purpose; namely, that from God's promises he may gather boldness to pray; while urging which promises before God, he was well assured in himself, that it was not possible but God should shew himself true. For as most men swallow up their own sorrow in themselves, because they despair of speeding, even so the more freely the faithful challenge God for his promises, the more stoutly wrestle they against distrust, and encourage themselves to hope well.

46 How long wilt thou hide thyself away for ever, O Lord? shall thy wrath burn like fire?

47 Remember of what age I am: why shouldst thou have created all the sons of men in vain?

48 What man shall live, and not see death? shall he deliver his own life from the hand of the grave?

46 *How long, &c.*] After he has bewailed the sad calamities of the church, he turns to prayer. Whence it follows that the words of grief which he has poured forth hitherto, although they emanated from the carnal sense, were nevertheless joined with faith: for though the unbelievers rush forth to prayer with great ado, yet crave they nothing unfeignedly. But the prophet, connecting prayer with his complaints, gives us to understand that he was never bereft of faith in God's promises. Concerning this manner of speech, *How long, for ever?* we have spoken in Psalm lxxix. 5; namely, that it betokens too long continuance of ill success. Moreover, by asking *How long God will hide himself away*, he gives an inkling that all will be well as soon as he sheweth a serene countenance. And in the second member he specifies again, wherefore God vouchsafeth not to look upon his chosen people with his fatherly countenance, that is, because he is displeased. Whence it follows, that all misfortunes proceed from sin, since they are the scourges of an offended God. Nevertheless, after he has confessed that it is through the church's own default that she is so sorely and so piteously afflicted,

that he may move God to commiseration, he alleges the shortness of man's life, in which if we receive no taste of God's goodness, we shall seem to be created in vain. Wherefore, that we may comprehend the effect, it will be better to begin the sentence with this member, *Why shouldst thou have created all the sons of men in vain?* For from a true fountain do the faithful draw this principle, That God hath therefore created men, and set them in this world that he may shew himself a father to them. For seeing that his bounteousness extends itself even to the cattle and brute beasts, it were too absurd that we, who hold the chief place among living beings, should have no part in it. If this were the end of our creation, it were better for us never to be born, than to pine away in continual sorrow. To this is added the short race of our life; for unless God make timely speed in giving us to taste his benefits, there will be no opportunity for it in this evanescent state of transition. Now we perceive what the prophet means in this verse: first, he considers that men were created to the end they should enjoy God's bounty in this world: whence he gathers, that men are born in vain, except God shew himself a father towards them. Moreover, as the course of this life is short, if God make not haste to bless us, he concludes that there will no longer be opportunity when this life is run out. But first, the saints seem to take too much upon them in prescribing a time to God. Again, though God vex us with continual torments as long as we wander in the world, yet it is preposterous to infer thence that we are created in vain; because there remains a better life for us in heaven, into the hope whereof being adopted, it is no marvel though our life be now hidden on earth. I answer that it is by God's sufferance that the saints take this liberty of urging him to make haste, by their prayers; provided they bridle themselves with the bit of modesty, and restraining their heat yield themselves wholly to his discretion. Concerning the second point we must think thus; That if this life of ours must be dragged on amid continual torments, it is a reality that there is comfort enough to make us bear out our miseries, if we lift up our minds to heaven. But weak as we are, no one will do this except he have a taste of God's goodness beforehand in this life; and again it is to be noted, that the complaints of the faithful are not to be tried according to the rule of perfection, because they proceed not from a settled and undisturbed apprehension of things, but derive some discomposure from the vehemence of the affections. I confess indeed, that if any man measure God's love by the present state, he doth amiss; *for whom*

God loveth he chastiseth; Heb. xii. 6. But as he is never so stern towards his, but that he sheweth his favour towards them in deed and by experience, it stands always true, that it profits not men to live, unless they may feel God to be their father, in their lifetime. And as for the second member, I have told you heretofore, that our prayers do not flow in a uniform course, but sometimes betray an intemperateness of sorrow. And therefore it is no wonder though such inadvertency creep over the godly, that they have not the life to come always before their eyes, while immeasurable sorrow or fear fills their thoughts and holds them prisoners. Many think it to be much against reason, if the children of God the moment they begin to think do not immediately penetrate into heaven: as though it befell not often that thick mists cross us in our way, which may either stop or hinder our sight: for to have faith dimmed, is one thing; and to have it utterly quenched, is another. And doubtless, whosoever is practised in God's judgments and in the warfare of temptations, will confess himself not to be so mindful of the spiritual life as he ought to be. Therefore, though this sentence be grounded upon a good principle, yet it savours of a faulty excess, whence it appears that even in our best framed prayers, we have always need of pardon. For unless God bear with our infirmity, there always escapes us some excess. In the next verse he confirms that which I have said already on the brevity of man's life. The sum is, that God's grace will be shut out, unless he speedily seize the occasion to shew himself a father to men. And he uses the word *נבר*, which is derived from puissance, that he may the better express that no man is exempted from the dominion of death.

49 Lord, where are thy former mercies? thou hast sworn to David in thy truth.

50 Lord, remember the reproach of thy servants: I have borne up in my bosom all the reproaches of mighty peoples;

51 Which thine enemies have cast forth, O Lord; which they have cast in the footsteps of thine anointed.

52 Blessed be the Lord for ever. So be it, and so be it.

49 *Lord, where, &c.*] The prophet takes heart by calling to mind the benefits of God, as though he should reason

that God cannot be unlike himself, and therefore that the bounteousness which he shewed in old time to the fathers cannot be extinguished. This comparison indeed might break down the spirits of the godly, when they see themselves not altogether so gently treated at God's hand, unless it occurred therewith that God is neither changed at any time, nor wearied in the course of his bountifulness. Some interpreters connect the second member with the first, by interposing the relative, thus; *Where are the mercies which thou hast sworn?* This I willingly admit, because the sense is in a manner the same, though the relative be left out. For God had avouched the truth of his promise by evident proofs, and therefore the faithful allege to God as well the promise itself as the manifold effects of the same. And they say *in truth*, that they may the more boldly draw to themselves whatsoever things God had performed in times past. For their case is the same, since God, who is always consistent with himself, hath sworn that he will be merciful to David's posterity throughout all ages.

51 *Lord, remember, &c.*] Again they allege what was of no small force to provoke God's mercy, namely, that they were scorned of the ungodly. For the more grievous and troublesome a temptation it is to have our patience mocked by the ungodly, that condemning our faith they may cast us headlong into despair, the more ready is God to rescue us, lest our weak hearts should yield to the temptation. For the prophet does not simply mean that the reproaches of his enemies are more than he is able to bear, but that this frowardness of theirs, wherewith they spurn at the faith and patience of the godly, must be repressed by God, lest they that trust in him should be put to shame. This same thing he enhances more in the second member, when he says he *bare all kind of reproaches at the hands of many peoples, or great peoples*: for the word רבים may be taken both ways. Moreover, as he had spoken of God's servants in general, it is not without cause that he changes the number, that each one of the faithful may be earnestly moved to pray. Also the part, *in my bosom*, is of great force, as if he should say that the ungodly not only fling out their railings afar off at the children of God, but also pour them out against them, so that they are fain to receive them in their bosom. And the perverseness of this our age is such, that we have need of the use of this doctrine, for the earth swarms with heathenish and proud despisers of God, who cease not to spurn at us; and whereas Satan is a cunning master of such rhetorick, the calamities of the church also yield them materials to work upon. Some

take *the bosom* for the secret affection of the heart, but it seems refining too much.

52 *Which thine enemies, &c.*] Now he says not that the wicked with their railings vex the children of God, but that they gird at God himself. For it is of much more force in procuring favour, to beseech and request him to maintain his own cause, not only because he is wounded in the person of his church, but also because all reproaches whereby the simplicity of faith is impeached redound against him, according as he saith in Is. xxxvii. 22, *At whom hath thine enemy shaken his head? and at whom hath he railed, O virgin daughter of Sion? That wicked traitor Rapsaces thought he had scoffed only at the wretched Jews, whom he besieged, and whom he believed he should soon after have gotten into his hands; God, however, taketh it as if they had levelled their blasphemies directly at himself. In this respect also he calls them the enemies of God, because in persecuting the church of God they assault God, under whose protection the church is. In the second member he has put the footsteps of the anointed for Christ's coming, even as in Is. lii. 7, How beautiful are the feet of the messengers of peace. For though the word עֶלֶף now and then signifies a heel, yet in this place, as often elsewhere, properly it is the sole or lower part of the foot. Others translate it a pace or step in the same sense. It is not to be doubted that the prophet, by putting the part for the whole, denotes the feet; and again, by transferring the name of one thing to another, means the coming of Christ: for as the wicked saw the Jews hang upon the hope of redemption, and bear all adversities patiently, because they were promised a deliverer, they scornfully railed at their patience as though it had been but a tale whatsoever the prophets had witnessed concerning the coming of Christ. And now also, though he has been shewn once to the world, yet because being received up into the glory of heaven he seemeth to be far off from us, and to have forsaken his church, the filthy dogs scoff at our hope, as if it were a mere delusion.*

53 *Blessed be the Lord, &c.*] I marvel why divers interpreters imagine this verse to have been added by a copyist, because it corresponds not with the context. As though praise and thanksgiving to God would not be as suitable at the close of a matter as at the beginning of it. Therefore I doubt not that after the prophet has freely bewailed the miseries of the church, then, to allay the bitterness of his grief, he purposely bursts out into the praise of God. As for the part *So be it, and So be it*, I easily grant it to be set down here (as in Psalm xli. 14, and lxxii. 19), to distinguish

the book. But whosoever he was that compiled this Psalm, doubtless his purpose was to assuage the greatness of his grief in the extremity of heaviness, with this expression of exultation, that he might the more cheerfully hope for deliverance.

PSALM XC.

Because Moses intended to treat as well of the shortness and miseries of man's life, as of the punishments laid upon the people of Israel; that he may with some manner of comfort assuage the grief and fear which the faithful might have conceived by the common course of nature, and especially by their own afflictions, he speaks first of the peculiar grace which God hath vouchsafed to his chosen people. Afterwards he recites in few words how wretched the state of man is, if they allow their thoughts to settle themselves on the world, especially when God citeth the offenders to his judgment-seat. And after he has bewailed that even the children of Abraham also tasted of this severity for a time, so that they were almost consumed with sorrow, upon trust of God's free favour, whereby he had adopted them, he beseeches him to shew himself merciful and gracious to them again as he had been in times past, so that he should go through the whole course of his grace even unto the end.

[*The Prayer of Moses, the Man of God.*]

1 Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place from generation to generation.

2 Before the mountains were created, and before thou madest the earth, and the world, and from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

It is doubted whether this Psalm were composed by Moses himself, or whether some one of the prophets for the behoof of the people framed it into a song out of the form of praying handed down by Moses. Certainly the matter of it affords a plausible ground for its being dedicated to Moses; yea rather, as the use of Psalms flourished even in his days, I doubt not but he was the author of it. As for those that think the reason why it is dedicated to him is because it was commonly sung by his posterity, I see not why they should resort to so insipid a fiction. Nay rather, the addition that is put to it soon after, clearly confutes them. For it is not for nought that Moses is here expressly termed *the Man of*

God, but he is decked with this title of honour to win authority to his doctrine. And if conjectures are to be admitted, it is likely that when the time of his death drew near, he endited this prayer to assuage the continual sorrow by which the people had almost pined away, and to refresh their hearts oppressed with an accumulation of adversities. For though the goodness of God had shone upon them wonderfully in their deliverance, so that it might have buried their former miseries and filled them with joy, yet we know that soon after it was effaced by their own unthankfulness, and thus continual languishing consumed them in the wilderness for forty years together. In good season therefore might Moses at that time sue to God to deal mercifully and gently with his people, according to the years that he had plagued them.

[*Lord, thou hast been, &c.*] In separating the children of Abraham by a singular privilege from the residue of mankind, he commends the grace of adoption wherewith God had embraced them. And the intent of this commencement is, that what favour God had extended in old time towards the holy patriarchs, he should now renew and continue the same towards their offspring. Some interpreters think that Moses alludes to the tabernacle, because God's majesty was no less apparent there than if he had dwelt in the midst of the people, but I think it quite out of season. For he rather comprehends the whole time that the fathers sojourned in the land of Canaan. Again; as the tabernacle had not yet continued full forty years, so long a continuance as is mentioned here would in nowise agree. Therefore he declares not in what manner God shewed himself towards the Israelites since the time he had delivered them, but how their fathers had found him in all ages, even from the beginning. And as they had always been pilgrims and wanderers, he aptly declares that God was to them instead of a dwelling-place. For though the state of all men be unstable upon earth, yet we know that Abraham and his offspring were sojourners, and in a manner exiles above all others. Therefore as they wandered in the land of Canaan till they were conveyed into Egypt, where also they lived by sufferance from day to day, it behoved them to seek an abode under the shadow of God, without which they could scarce have been accounted as inhabitants of the world, considering they were everywhere foreigners, and afterwards led about through various by-ways. But that the Lord sustained them and shielded them with his hand through all their pilgrimages, at such times as they sojourned among savage and cruel nations, and lay open to receive harm at

their hand, Moses extols this graciousness with a singular title, in assigning God to them for a house and dwelling-place when they were fugitives and wandered continually from one lodging to another. And he amplifies the same by the length of time, because he had not ceased to shield them with his defence above four hundred years together, so that they dwelt all the while under his wings.

2 *Before the mountains, &c.*] Whereas Moses' purpose is to set forth some high and hidden mystery, yet seems he to speak in a spiritless and for the most part puerile manner. For who knows not that God was before the world? True, all men confess him so to be, but yet meanwhile scarce one in a hundred is thoroughly persuaded in himself that God continueth always like himself. But God is here contrasted with creatures, which we know to be subject to continual alterations, so that there is nothing steady under heaven. Especially inasmuch as nothing is more fluctuating than man's life, lest men might measure God by their own unsettled condition, he is placed here in quiet state. And so this everlastingness of which Moses speaks, is referred not only to his essence, but also to his providence whereby he governeth the world. For though he make the world subject to sundry alterations, yet abideth he himself unmoved; and that not only as to himself, but because the faithful find him not wavering, but steadfast in his power, truth, righteousness and goodness, such as he hath been from the beginning. This everlasting and unchangeable steadfastness of God could not truly be perceived before the world was made, when as yet there were no eyes to bear witness of it. But it is gathered from the sequel, because whereas all things are subject to revolution and incessant change, he retains his own nature still. There might be also an antithesis between him and all the counterfeit gods of the heathen, of which a throng crept in by little and little through the error and folly of men. But I have already shewn to what the drift of Moses tends; namely, that we do amiss if we measure God by our own understanding; and that we must mount above the earth, yea and above heaven too, whenever we think upon him.

3 Thou shalt turn man to destruction, and shalt say, Come back again, ye sons of Adam.

4 For a thousand years are in thy sight as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

5 Thou hast overflowed them; they shall be as a sleep: in the morning he shall grow as grass.

6 In the morning he shall flourish and grow; at night he shall be cut up and wither.

7 For we be astonished at thine anger, and in thy wrath are we overthrown.

8 Thou hast set our iniquities in thy sight, and our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.

3 *Thou shalt turn man, &c.*] First he declares how frail and transitory man's life is, and bewails the miseries thereof: not to quarrel with God, but to make him more forward to mercy, even as in other places he is said to bear with mortal men when he considereth whereof they are made, and remembereth that they are but dust and grass, Ps. ciii. 14. And he compares the course of our life to a ring, because God placing us upon earth turneth us about in a narrow compass, and when we come to the last point of our life, then plucketh he us back to himself in a moment. Others interpret it differently; namely, that God leadeth men forth to destruction, and afterwards reneweth them at the resurrection. But this subtlety is far-fetched, and agrees not with the text: therefore here is set down a simple definition of our life, that it is a certain short revolution, in which we quickly finish our circle, the last point whereof is the furthest bound of our journey. And this knowledge shews better how gloriously God dealeth with his servants, since he adopteth them to be his peculiar possession, that he may at length gather them together into his everlasting heritage. Neither is it for nought that he adds by way of contrariety, *that a thousand years before God are but as yesterday*. For though experience prove that men are forthwith taken out of the world as soon as they have completed their circle, yet doth not the knowledge of this frailty sink into our hearts, because we look not above the world. For whence cometh such stupidity, that men being tied to this present life make their calculation as if they should live two thousand years, but because they lift not their conceptions above the things that appear to the eyes? each man comparing himself with other imagines that he shall live long. In short, in this dulness of theirs they make account of thirty years, yea or fewer, as of an endless time; neither acknowledge they the shortness of their life as long as the world possesses their thoughts. This is the cause why Moses awakens us, lifting up our minds to God's heavenly everlastingness, without which we perceive not how transient our life is. For the fancy of a long duration is like a slumber, in which we all of us are benumbed until the minding of the heavenly life swallow up this vain

forgery of the earthly state. Moreover, because men are so blinded, he makes God judge over them; as if he should say, O Lord, if men would bethink them of that eternity from whence thou viewest those inconstant circlings of the world, they would make none account of this present life. But as they weigh not which is the true continuance, but rather wilfully turn away their eyes from heaven, therefore are they become dull of understanding, and account one day to be a hundred years. And it is a most effective apostrophe when Moses disgusted with our sottishness addresses himself to God; as if he should say that it is in vain for him to waste his breath among the deaf, who will not be taught that they are mortal, no not even by incessant proof and experience. This sentence is cited by Peter in a somewhat different sense, 2 Peter, iii. 8, and yet not improperly, because he aptly and skilfully draws out of the testimony of Moses what he handles in that place. The intent of Moses is to withdraw men from gross conceptions, and to lift them up to heaven. And what does Peter? because many men, (as Christ maketh not haste according to their desire,) for weariness of long delay, cast off the hope of the resurrection, he corrects this perverse impatience with an excellent remedy. He sees men faint and fall from God's promises, because Christ seemeth to make too long tarriance. Whence comes this, but because they grovel upon the earth? fitly therefore does he apply the saying of Moses to remedy this defect. For as the unbelievers give themselves to delusive pleasures because, being too much addicted to the world, they taste not of the heavenly eternity; so also out of the same fountain springs impatience. And hence we gather the true use of this doctrine: for whence comes it that we are so careful for our life, that nothing can suffice us, and are a trouble to ourselves, but because we fondly imagine that we shall nestle in this world for ever? Again; whence comes that excessive peevishness, that our hearts quail in looking for the coming of Christ, but because they grovel upon earth? Let us learn then not to judge according to the understanding of the flesh, but to depend upon the judgment of God. And therefore let us mount upward by faith even to his heavenly throne, from whence he assureth us that the earthly life is nought. Neither does Moses only restrain a thousand years unto one day, but he says *yesterday*, which is already past and gone; for whatsoever is still before our eyes has a hold upon our minds; but that which is past affects us less by the recollection of it. As for the word *watch*, we know that the ancients used to divide the night into four watches, consisting of three hours each. Now this similitude is added

to make the matter seem less, as though a thousand years in God's sight differed nothing from three hours of the night, in which men scarcely know whether they are awake or asleep.

5 *Thou hast overflowed them, &c.*] He confirms what he had said before, that as long as men wander in this world they do but run a certain momentary round. For I restrain not the word *overflow* to the sorer sort of plagues, but I think that death in general is simply compared to a waterflood. For when we have stood a little while in the world, by and by we fall into the grave, and are overwhelmed with earth; and so death, which is common to all, is properly called *an overflowing*. For the Lord doth no less overflow us while drawing the breath of life, than he overfloweth those that perish by being swallowed up by shipwreck; so that death may fitly be termed an invisible overflowing. And Moses says, that then it is made manifest that men who lay claim to such vigour in their puny course, are but as a sleep. The comparison of grass which is added tends to this effect, that men come forth in the morning and blossom like the grass, and that they become green, or pass away within a short time, till they are cut down and wither. Because the verbs are of the singular number, they seem better joined to the word *grass*, though they may also be fitly applied to each man. However, as it is of little consequence to the general effect of the matter, I do not trouble much about it. Moreover, this doctrine requires continual attention, for though all of us confess that nothing is more transitory than our life, yet soon every one of us is carried away as it were by frantick impulse to fancy an earthly immortality. For whosoever bears in mind that he is mortal, bridles his own affections that he trouble not himself about many things, but hastens to the mark. But when we appoint no limit to our cares, we must be quickened by continual goadings, that we dream not of a thousand lives instead of one which is but as a shadow that soon passes away.

7 *For we are, &c.*] Moses makes mention of God's anger advisedly, with the feeling whereof unless men be touched they never weigh well what experience forces them to acknowledge, that is, how soon their race is run, and they themselves fade away. Although Moses has yet another reason why he joined these two together; namely, that whereas men are by nature so transitory and in a manner shadowy, the people of Israel were smitten to the earth by the hostile hand of God, for the wrath of God is less endurable to us, being frail and transitory, than it would be if we had some tolerable degree of strength. However, to

shew that he by no means intends to wrangle with God by this complaint, he says that God's wrath, were it never so terrible, was yet just, because his people had provoked it through their own fault; for they that are not humbled when they are stricken with the hand of God harden themselves more. Therefore the true way to profit, and also to subdue pride, is to feel that God is a righteous judge. Moses therefore, when he has briefly taught that men by nature vanish away like smoke, gathers therefrom that it is no wonder if God astonish and consume those whom he pursueth with his wrath. And the manner of speaking is to be noted, that God, when he uttereth the tokens of his wrath, doth set men's sins before his eyes; for thence it follows, that whatsoever relief is given us ought of duty to be ascribed to God's forbearance, who burieth our sins in order to spare us. Some translate the word עֲלֻמִּים, in the second member, *youthfulness*; as if he had said that the offences of youth are called to remembrance, which is too forced and wrested; for thus the antithesis between *the secret sins* and *the light of God's countenance* would be destroyed; whereby Moses intimates, that as long as God shineth not upon men with the light of his judgment, they hide themselves in mists, and wrap themselves in many deceits; but as soon as God plucketh them back from their subterfuges by which they endeavour to slip from him, and setteth before his eyes the sins which they hide by hypocrisy, then fear and dread subdue them, and humble them unfeignedly.

9 For all our days are passed away at thy displeasure: we have spent our years as it were a thought.

10 In the days of our years are threescore and ten years, and if in strength fourscore years: and the pride of them is but painfulness and travail: for it passeth over swiftly, and we fly away.

9 *For all our days, &c.*] Although it might be a general confirmation of the former sentence, that the whole course of a man's life is quickly despatched as soon as God sheweth himself displeased, yet, in my judgment, Moses rather enlarges what he said before of the rigour of God's wrath, and his strait examination in chastising sins. For he says not that this terror which God laid upon his people was for a small time only, but that it was extended unremittingly, even to death. Therefore he complains that the Jews were

in a manner worn out with continual miseries, because God neither remitted nor mitigated his wrath. Wherefore it is no wonder though he say that their years passed away like a tale, when God's wrath lay upon them so continually.

10 *In the days, &c.*] He returns again to his general doctrine, how precarious is man's condition although God shew not forth his wrath openly to put them in fear. What continuance has our life? says he. Verily, if we reckon all our years to the uttermost, we shall at length come to the threescore and ten years, or if there be any more lusty and long lived, they shall bring us to fourscore at furthest. And he says *the days of our years* emphatically, because while the time is divided into small portions, the very number itself beguiles us, so that we presume that our life is longer than it is. Minding to prove these vain delusions, he gives men leave to crowd many thousand years in a few years. Nevertheless he avouches that this great heap is soon brought to nothing. Then let men amplify the space of their life as much as pleases them, in respect that each year contains three hundred, three score, and five days: assuredly they shall find the term of seventy years to be but short, and yet from their lengthened reckoning of the days, after all this is the sum that results. As for him that is fourscore years old he makes haste to his grave. Moses himself lived longer, and so peradventure did others in his time, but he speaks here of the ordinary rate; and even then were they accounted old men, and in a manner decrepid, that came to fourscore years; so that it is not without cause that he says that that befalls only such as are strong. He takes *pride for strength or superiority*, whereof men vaunt themselves so highly. And his meaning is, that before men droop towards old age, they are hampered with many diseases even in the midst of the bloom of youth, and that they cannot escape from the cares, weariness, sorrows, fears, griefs, annoyances, and anxieties to which man's life is subject. Nevertheless, this is referred to the whole course of the life. And assuredly if a man consider of what sort our life is from our infancy to our grave, he will find troubles and painfulness in every part of it. For when *עַל וְאֵן* are joined together, they are taken passively for *inconveniences and afflictions*; as if Moses had said that the life of man is painful and fraught with many torments, yea, and that when they are in their chief pride. The reason which he adds, namely, *it passeth swiftly, and we fly away*, seems hardly to square with the place. For it may be that the felicity which is but short is not therefore none at all. But the meaning of Moses is, that men foolishly glory in their

excellence, because whether they are willing or not they are constrained to look to the time to come. And as soon as they open their eyes they see that they are haled and borne away to death with headlong flight, and that their bravery vanishes every moment.

11 Who knoweth the force of thy wrath? And according to thy fear so is thy wrath.

12 Make us so to know that we may number our days: and we will bring our hearts unto wisdom.

13 Return, O Lord, how long? Be pacified towards thy servants.

11 *Who knoweth, &c.*] Again he brings back his discourse to the peculiar afflictions of the people. For upon the same occasion had he before complained of the general frailty and miseries of mankind. And worthily does he cry out that the power of God's wrath passeth all understanding. For as long as he withholdeth his hand, men leap about wantonly like a sort of runaway slaves, who are no longer afraid because they are out of their master's sight. Neither can their stubborn nature be otherwise compelled to obedience, unless God strike them with the fear of his judgment. The sense therefore is, that as long as God hideth himself, and dissembleth his displeasure, men are puffed up with insolence, and rush on with overbearing impetuosity; but as soon as they are compelled to feel how dreadful his displeasure is, they forget their lustiness and fall back to nothing. That which follows, namely, *according as thy fear is, so is thy wrath*, is wont to be expounded thus: The more any man stands in awe of God, the more sorely and sternly is he wont to be dealt withal, for *judgment beginneth at God's own house*, 1 Pet. iv. 17. And whereas he pampereth the reprobates in their own fatness, he maketh his chosen lean with continual troubles, and in short, *chastiseth them whom he loveth*, Heb. xii. 6. A true doctrine, and profitable is it, therefore, that God treateth his elect more roughly than he doth the castaways. But I think that Moses has another meaning in this place, that is, that the reverent fear of God is the only cause of our feeling his wrath unfeignedly and earnestly. For we see how the reprobates, though they are sharply chastised, either chafe upon the bit, or kick against God and run stark mad, or else stand amazed as though they were callous to all suffering; so far are they from being subdued. And though they rage and clamour, yet doth not God's wrath so pierce into

their hearts that their fierceness abateth. Godly minds only are wounded with the wrath of God, nor wait for the thunderbolts against which the reprobates hold out their hard and iron necks; but they tremble every limb of them in a moment if God wag but his little finger at them. 'This I take to be the genuine meaning of the prophet. He had said that it could not be sufficiently comprehended by man's understanding how horrible God's wrath is. And we see that though God shake heaven and earth, yet many of cyclopiam hardihood deride it, and with brutal insolence despise God while brandishing his bolts. But as he treats of a doctrine peculiar to the children of God, he says that in them is the most sensitive feeling of God's wrath, even such that they gently submit themselves to his authority. For though to the wicked their own conscience is a tormentor which suffers them not to have any rest, yet are they so far from learning meekness from that secret dread, that they clamour against God with augmented frowardness. In a word, God's wrath is felt only by the faithful, who being subdued by it, acknowledge themselves to be nothing, and with true lowliness devote themselves wholly to God. This wisdom lighteth not upon reprobate persons, who cannot lay aside the pride wherewith they are puffed up; for they are not touched with the feeling of God's wrath, because they also stand not in fear of him.

12 *That we may number our days, &c.*] Some translate it, *to the number of our days*, but in the same sense. For as Moses saw that what he had hitherto taught is not comprehended by man's understanding until God shine upon him with his Spirit, now he turns himself to praying. Truly, at the first blush it seems a fond prayer to desire that we might know the number of our years. For what? seeing that even the strongest scarcely attain to fourscore years, is it so hard a matter to reckon so few years? Children learn numbers as soon as they begin to prattle, neither have we need of a schoolmaster in arithmetic to teach us to count a hundred upon our fingers. So much the fouler then and more shameful is our blockishness that we never comprehend how short is the space of our life. For even he that is best in arithmetic, and can most precisely and accurately understand and investigate millions of millions, is nevertheless to seek how to count fourscore years in his own life. Surely it is a monstrous thing that men should measure all distances without themselves, know how many feet the moon is distant from the centre of the earth, how much space is between planet and planet, and finally to comprehend all the dimensions both of heaven and earth; and yet cannot number

threescore and ten years in their own case. We see then that what Moses with good reason craves at God's hand, is a point of rare and singular wisdom. The latter member is also especially worthy to be marked, by which he teaches us that we then truly apply our minds to wisdom, when we are comprehending the shortness of man's life. For what greater madness can there be than to rove about without aiming at any certain mark? But the faithful alone, to whom the difference is known between this transitory life and a blessed eternity, know what ought to be the aim of their life. No man then can frame his life with a settled mind, save he who, knowing the end of life, that is to say, death itself, is led to the consideration of the end for which he lives, so that he may go on to the prize of his heavenly calling.

13 *Return, O Lord, &c.*] To his complaint he annexes a prayer: That God who for a long while had not ceased to punish his people very sore, should at length be bowed unto gentleness. For though he gave daily some taste of his love, yet was their banishment from the land of promise a most grievous scourge, by which they were admonished that they were unworthy of that blessed inheritance which God had appointed for his children. For they could not but oftentimes call to mind that dreadful oath which God had thundered out against them, *They shall not enter into my rest, but their carcasses shall rot in the wilderness*, Num. xiv. 23, 32. And I doubt not but he combines that sore bondage of theirs which they had gone through in Egypt, with their wanderings in the wilderness; and therefore not without cause does he in the words *how long*, bewail their protracted languishing. Now as God is said to turn his back upon us, or to depart far from us when he withdraweth the tokens of his favour, so by his coming again is meant the manifestation of his grace. As for the word נָחַם, as it signifies *to repent*, it will not be amiss to expound it thus: Let it repent thee of thy servants. For it appears by the common custom of the scripture that it is termed the repentance of God, when putting away men's sorrow, and restoring matter of gladness, he seemeth as it were altered. However, those seem to come nearer to the meaning of Moses, who translate it, *Comfort thyself over thy servants*. For God in cherishing us tenderly, taketh no less pleasure in us, than does a father in his own children. And that is nothing but to be pacified, or to be merciful, according as we have translated it, that the meaning might be more simple.

14 Fill us with thy goodness betimes, and we shall rejoice and be glad all our days.

15 Cheer us according to the days of our affliction, and the years in which we have seen evil.

16 Let thy work appear toward thy servants, and thy glory upon their children.

17 And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and guide thou the work of our hands upon us, yea guide thou the work of our hands.

16 *Let thy work, &c.*] Because God, forsaking his church, doth after a sort put on the character that does not belong to him, Moses with judgment calls the grace of protection, which he had promised to the children of Abraham, *God's proper work*. Therefore, though in all the examples of punishment with which God visited the falsehood, unthankfulness, stubbornness, lusts, and unhallowed desires of his people, his work was manifest, yet does Moses, by way of excellence, prefer, before all other proofs of his power, that care of his which he had to preserve his people in welfare, whereby it was his will to make himself most known. In consideration hereof, Paul, Rom. ix. 23, especially signalizes God's goodness with the title of glory. For though he maintain his glory by judging the world, yet as nothing is more natural with him than to shew himself gracious, therefore his glory is said to excel in his benefits. As for the present passage, God had but then begun to set his people at liberty, for the enjoying of the land of Canaan was yet to come. Therefore, if they had gone no further than the wilderness, their deliverance had been obscurely manifested. Besides this, Moses estimates God's work by his promise, and therefore he denies that it is a full and perfect work in all points, unless he continue his grace even to the end: which is expressed yet more plainly in the second member, where he prays for the welfare not only of his own age, but also of the generation yet unborn. For such also was the form of the covenant, Gen. xvii. 7, *I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed*. Furthermore, we are warned by this example to have a care of them that are to come, especially because we are promised an everlasting continuance of the church unto the end of the world, even as we shall see in the next Psalm, that in all the prayers which we make for the welfare thereof, it behoves us to comprehend also our posterity which are not yet born. Besides this, the words *glory* and *beauty* are to be marked, as

by them we gather how incomparable God's love is towards us. For though he gain nothing himself by decking us with his gifts, yet is it his will to shine forth, and to manifest his fair face by dealing bounteously with us, as though his beauty were hid when he ceaseth to ply us with his beneficence. Afterwards follows, *Guide thou the work of our hands upon us*; whereby Moses means that we cannot attempt or take anything in hand happily, unless God yields himself as our guide and counsellor, and directs us by his auspices. Whence it follows, that the reason why the attempts and practices of worldlings fall out contrariwise, is that by not following God they turn all things upside down by confusion and disorder. Neither is the part עָלֵינוּ superfluous: for, though God direct to the best end whatsoever Satan and all the reprobates practise, yet hath the church a special privilege, in which God exerciseth an undisturbed rule. For God by his secret providence directeth his working towards the reprobates externally to them, but he governeth the faithful by his Holy Spirit internally; and therefore he in a peculiar sense ordereth the work of their hands. And the repetition shews that there is required a continual course of perseverance in the grace of God. For it were not enough for us to be brought to the midst of our journey, unless he finish our whole race. Others translate it *confirm*, or *establish*, which sense is tolerable. I have, however, followed that which was more suited to the context, namely, that God should order all the actions of the godly to a happy end.

PSALM XCI.

He declares that God hath a care of the welfare of the godly, so that he never forsaketh them in perils. And therefore he exhorts the faithful to walk fearlessly through all dangers, upon assurance of his defence. A most profitable doctrine. For though all men talk of God's providence, and confess him to be the keeper of the faithful, yet is there scarce one in a hundred that commits his salvation to God's protection.

1 He that dwelleth in the secret of the Most High, shall abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say unto the Lord, He is my hope, my fortress, and my God: in him will I trust.

3 Surely he will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

4 He will brood thee under with his wings, and thou shalt be safe under his feathers: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

1 *He that, &c.*] Certain Hebrew interpreters read the first three verses all in one strain, so that the sentence should continue incomplete down to the member that begins, *Surely he will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler*: and they expound it thus; He that dwelleth under the refuge of the Most High, and abideth under the shadow of God, I will say to him, concerning the Lord, that he is his hope and fortress, and the God in whom he may safely rest; for he shall deliver him from the snare, &c. But how constrained that exposition is, is manifest. Again, they that are of that opinion are moved by a frivolous reason, that is, because they think one thing to be repeated twice in the first verse, and therefore they can pick out no sense: wherein they are far from the truth. For the prophet, (whosoever he was that was author of the Psalm,) denotes different things, in saying that those who lie shrouded under the custody of God are not laid open to the strokes of weapons, but inhabit a safe and quiet place. If any man should speak thus, He that hath God as the defender of his welfare, shall rest under the shadow of God, there will be a strongly marked sense in the second member. For in that place God's power is contrasted with man's help. So also in this place the prophet says that those who dwell in the secret of God shall abide under his shadow; for they shall perceive in the end to what his protection avails. Therefore, as a great part of the world seek for themselves various retreats, and according as each see themselves in danger of more adversities, look about them in every direction, he teaches that there is nowhere else any sure and impregnable fortress of safety, save only in the defence of God. Therefore he contrasts all the hopes wherewith we are deluded for the most part with the assuredness of them that rest upon God. The same doctrine he confirms in the second verse, and therewith shews that he speaks from his own feeling, and the experience of faith, which is exceedingly needful in a teacher. For after all this is the true knowledge, which a man may deliver over to others in succession, when we utter the things that God hath manifested to us, not from our lips only, but from the bottom of our heart. The prophet then avouches, that what he taught just now proceeds from the innermost affection of his heart. Now though the letter *7* be taken for *of*, or *concerning*, and many translate it so in

this place, yet the translation I have given is more forcible. For the faithful believe not simply that God will be to them instead of a bulwark, but upon trust of his promises they address themselves to him familiarly. And so by their boldness of praying he confirms how safe it is to dwell under the shadow of God. For this holy glorying is the greatest triumph of faith, when we approach God fearlessly, whatsoever betide, and are thoroughly persuaded in ourselves, not only that he heareth our prayers, but also that there is defence enough, and to spare, for us in his hand. In the third verse he says that the hope whereof he spoke shall not be fallacious or vain, because God is a continual deliverer of those that are his. For I doubt not but he turns his discourse to himself, and thereby heartens himself to hope well. Some make a distinction betwixt *the snare and destruction*, or *pestilence*, as it were between a secret and an open mischief; as though the prophet had said, Whether it be that Satan lay wait for us by stealthy arts, or assault us by open force, God's help shall be in readiness; which exposition I disapprove not. For though some men had rather take the words in the simpler sense, yet is it likely that all kinds of evils are denoted here, that we may know that we cannot be in peril in any respect, but God can succour us.

4 *He will, &c.*] This similitude, which the scripture uses in other places also, paints in attractive colours God's amazing solicitude in preserving our welfare. Doubtless, if the majesty of God be considered in itself, it can have no affinity to hens or other birds, that he should spread out his wings to cherish his young ones. But he, verily in regard of our infirmity, disdaineth not to descend after a sort from his heavenly glory, that he may allure us the more gently under the image of a hen. Therefore there is nothing that should stop us from familiar access to him, seeing he humbleth himself so lovingly to us. Now though God's truth, which he says shall be as good to us as a *buckler* or a *shield*, be taken for his faithfulness, because God never forsaketh his own in their necessity, yet is there no doubt but that the prophet has an eye to God's promises, without which no man durst obtrude himself into God's presence. Since, therefore, setting aside the word, we could not taste this goodness of God, on which the prophet descants, he brings God himself for a witness of the same. And as just now by comparing God to a fortress, he avouched that they should be safe and unhurt that rest in him, so now by likening him to a shield, he declares that he will stand between us and our enemy to defend us from all assaults.

5 Thou shalt not be afraid of the fear in the night, nor of the arrow that shall fly by day.

6 Nor of the destruction that walketh in the dark, nor of the plague that destroyeth at noon-day.

7 A thousand shall fall on thy side, and ten thousand on thy right side; and yet it shall not come near thee.

8 Verily thou shalt behold it with thine eyes, and thou shalt see the reward of the wicked.

5 *Thou shalt not be afraid, &c.*] The prophet unfolds more at large what I touched upon before; that on what side soever Satan put us to trouble, and with what kind of weapons soever he assail us, he shall do us no harm at all if we content ourselves with the only defence of God. And it is worth while to bear in mind that they whom God hath taken under his protection, are well fenced on all sides. For though nothing be more difficult than to embrace God as our deliverer, though any man have advanced up to that point, yet, as soon as he comes to encounter so many deaths and so many inconveniences wherewith this life of ours is besieged, there keeps with it a misgiving which breeds uneasiness and fearfulness. Not without cause therefore does the prophet reckon up sundry sorts of mischiefs, that the faithful should not warrant themselves some one deliverance at God's hand, but that they should manfully withstand innumerable temptations. The reason why he makes mention of fear in the night time, is both because darkness makes men fearful, and also because the night is subject to many inconveniences: again, if anything do but creak, our imaginations magnify our fears. The reason why he rather chose the arrow that flieth by day, than any other weapon, is, in my judgment, because it is both shot further and also cannot easily be shunned by reason of the swiftness of it. In the second member he inculcates the same thing in other words; namely, that there is no kind of harm which God repelleth not with the buckler of his help.

7 *A thousand shall fall, &c.*] He pursues his former purpose, that though the case of all men be alike to seeming; yet the faithful are by a singular privilege exempted from the evils that approach them, and in a manner hang over their heads. For otherwise they would think thus: What? art not thou one of the common sort of men whose life is environed with a thousand deaths? The prophet, to redress this misdoubting, tells them expressly, that though the whole

world should be mingled in ruin, yet doth God with singular care consult for his servants, that they should not perish indiscriminately among the multitude. A very necessary warning, that although we are by nature subject to all misfortunes as well as other men, yet we are by singular privilege exempted, so that we are always safe, even in dangers. In the next verse he not only gives us to understand that experience shall be an instructress, because the faithful shall find in very deed, and as it were behold with their eyes, that their welfare is laid up in the hand of God; but also he confirms this doctrine with another reason, that is, that God, who is the just judge of the world, punishing the wicked and reprobates with deserved destruction, defendeth them that are his. Although therefore things are oftentimes confounded upon earth, yet does the prophet say, that the faithful shall in this darkling mist plainly perceive God's judgments, whereby they may gather that they have not trusted in him in vain. He speaks to such as have eyes and are endued with the true light of faith, who watch earnestly in considering God's judgments, who also patiently and with silence await his good time. For the greater part, running before judgment, trouble themselves with their own hastiness, whereby it comes to pass that fleshly understanding is unable to discern the providence of God. Add to this, that it ought to suffice us, if God, deferring his judgments for the more part to the day of plenary revelation, give us now some prelibation of them.

9 For thou, Lord, art my defence, thou hast set the Most High for thy refuge.

10 There shall no evil encounter thee, neither shall any plague come near thy tent:

11 For he hath given his angels charge of thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

12 In their hands shall they bear thee up, that thou dash not thy foot against a stone.

9 *For thou, Lord, &c.*] He dwells much in commending God's providence, because the slothfulness of men is but slowly and not without many incitements stirred up to abandon worldly supports, to which they are devoted, and to betake them direct to God. Now, as in this Psalm, he from time to time changes the persons, so in this verse, first he speaks to God, and then turns his discourse again to himself. And he names God his defence, that he may the

more effectually, by his own example, drive the rest of the faithful unto him. With the same view he speaks to himself afterwards, that he may give the more assurance of his inward affection. For the very trial of faith is, when each man, gathering his thoughts to himself, examines his own mind apart from witnesses. For when we hold not ourselves content with God alone, but cast back our eyes to men, it can scarcely be but that desire of vainglory must wind itself into the place of faith. And God is said to be accounted for a dwelling-place, because both above and below he is our defender from all harms, even as is said also in Psalm xc. 1. This verse may be read jointly with the next, so that it may be a rendering of a cause. For there follows, *there shall none evil encounter thee*. But how are the approaches of evils kept off, but because we are shrouded quietly under the protection of God. True it is, that many inconveniences befall the faithful also, but the prophet means that God thrusteth in his hand against the violent assaults, lest the faithful should be utterly overwhelmed. Afterwards he extends this safe-keeping to the whole posterity of the godly. For we know that the fatherly love which God vouchsafeth to his servants, he embraceth their children with. Unless, perchance, any one had rather take it more simply, that those who choose God for their dwelling-place, shall dwell in safety at home in their own houses.

¶ *For he hath given, &c.*] This also was purposely added by the prophet, to obviate our infirmity; whereby we perceive how lovingly he fondleth us, in that he not only beareth with the fault of our distrust, but also giveth a remedy for it. Now, when he assureth us that he will be to us instead of a fortress and a shield, offering us the shadow of his hand; terming himself our house or refuge, and finally spreading out his wings to cherish us, are we not too too ungrateful if so many and unequivocal promises suffice us not? If his majesty terrifies us, he likeneth himself to a hen: if we are alarmed at the might of our enemies, or if we are at our wits' ends for multitude of dangers, he setteth forth his invincible power, which is able to swallow up all the forces that oppose it. And, behold, after he hath attempted to allure us to him so many ways, as he seeth that we come but slowly and leisurely to him, as though we were not content with him alone, he joineth the angels with him also, and offereth them to us for guardians of our welfare. Assuredly this is a signal testimony of his tender love, in that he relieveth our distrust, by assuring us that he is furnished with mighty hosts to defend us. Neither doth he assign to each man one angel, but he commandeth his hea-

venly hosts to be careful for the welfare of every one of the faithful. For the prophet speaks to each one of the faithful, even as also in Psalm xxxiv. 8, we have seen how the angels pitch their tents round about those that fear God. Whereby it appears to be a false surmise, that every man has his separate angel appointed him. And it is greatly for our behoof to understand that as we have to encounter with many foes so also we are fenced with many guardians. If God should give me but one angel for my chief defence, yet would even this be somewhat: but when I hear that he hath committed the charge of my welfare to many angels, now does the promise bear greater sway with me; even as through this trust Elisha did set light by the great host of his enemies: 2 Kings, vi. 16. Neither do those places of scripture militate against it, which seem to distribute to angels their several charges, so that they should have the oversight of several persons. For it is certain that God worketh diversely by his angels, so that he setteth some one of them over many people, and many of them over some one person. Now, in whatwise they conspire together to provide for our welfare, it is not for us to be too busy and curious in searching out. But let us hold ourselves content with this doctrine of the apostle, that as they are appointed to do us service, they are always intent on their charge. For in that hereafter, Psalm ciii. 20, and 21, they are said to be at hand to obey God and to execute his commandments, this also is available to the confirmation of our faith, seeing that God useth their service in defending us. And though the prophet treat of the several members of the church, yet is it not for nought that the devil applied it to the person of Christ. For howsoever he is evermore purposed to pervert and corrupt the truth of God, yet in respect of general principles he puts a plausible colour upon things, and is a tolerably acute theologian. And it must be admitted, that since the whole offspring of Adam is banished from the kingdom of God, we have no communion with the angels, nor the angels with us. It is only Christ, then, who, taking away the ground of separation, maketh us at one with the angels, according as it is his property to gather together in one the things that were severed both in heaven and earth, as Paul says, Eph. i. 10. The same was shewn to the holy patriarch Jacob, under the figure of the ladder; Gen. xxviii. 12. And because through Christ we grow into one body with the angels, he said, *Hereafter ye shall see the heavens open, and the angels shall ascend and descend*: John, i. 51. We see, then, that that is properly applied to the head, which by his benefit pertains to all the members.

Now, observe, the prophet says, *all the ways*, in the plural number, on purpose to express more plainly that whithersoever we go the angels shall ever be our guides. And certainly we see how tortuous and manifold the course of our life is, and what a number of storms hurry us hither and thither from time to time. It was requisite, therefore, that angels should be specially given us for guides in every one of our doings and purposes, so that we may know that they go before us, whether necessity drive us to the right hand or to the left. By the way, it is probable that under the name of *ways* is commended to us modesty, that we should not tempt God by throwing ourselves down headlong, but keep ourselves within the bounds of our calling. For if a man cast himself down rashly, and attempt more than God permitteth, as though he would climb above the clouds whether God will or no, there is no reason he should look to have the angels to be ministers and furtherers of his rashness. And Satan seems to have blurred this passage craftily, at what time he essayed to drive Christ rashly to throw himself down.

12 *In their hands, &c.*] He enlarges what he spoke concerning the guardianship of angels, as if he should say that they not only keep watch about us, lest any harm should befall us, but also stay up our footsteps with their hands, that we may go through with our course without stumbling. It is indeed by no means apparent that the faithful are carried up aloft, for they oftentimes are out of breath, or tired in walking, and oftentimes stumble, or else slip, yea and hardly, and with much ado, drag themselves along. But as in so great weakness we might every moment not only fall but also faint, unless God supported us wonderfully, the prophet with good reason commends so highly the bearing up which is afforded us by the ministration of angels. Furthermore, we should in nowise be able to overcome the arduous stumbling-blocks Satan casts in our ways, except God lifted us over them. Whosoever compares these two things together, namely, our own frail weakness on the one side, and on the other side the thorns, rugged places, difficult passes, rough ways, straits, and, besides all these, the dulness of our understandings, and the wiliness of Satan in laying snares for us, will find it to be no extravagant commendation, but confess that we cannot go three steps forward, unless the angels (after a sort contrary to our nature) bear us up in the air. Now, that we often trip, it is to be imputed to ourselves, because we separate ourselves from our head: and, although God will have us convicted of our own infirmity by our tripping or stumbling; yet, because

he suffereth us not to be bruised, it is the same as if he should put his hand under us.

13 Upon the lion and the adder shalt thou walk; thou shalt tread down the young lion and the dragon.

14 Because he rested upon me, I will deliver him: I exalt him, because he hath known my name.

15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and glorify him.

16 With length of days will I satisfy him, and I will shew him my salvation.

13 *Upon the lion, &c.*] He confirms the same proposition with other words. By the term *stones* he has already denoted all manner of lets whereby Satan endeavours to stop the course of our welfare. And now by the *adder*, *lion*, *young lion*, and *dragon*, he indicates the deadly perils to which we are subject in this world. Truly, as long as we wander here, we must be fain to walk among fierce wild beasts, or venomous creatures. What would then become of us, if God should not warrant us victory against so many annoyances continually hanging over us? Whosoever therefore weighs his own temptations, will not wonder that the prophet has used a hyperbolical form of speech to rid the faithful from dismay and fear; nay rather, he will say it is no hyperbole at all, because the effect is answerable to the words in very deed. Truly as long as we are out of gunshot, we seem over and above valiant, but when engaged in affairs of the smallest magnitude, our imaginations picture to us lions and dragons, and we fancy ourselves exposed to many slaughters; and therefore the prophet has tempered his language to the understanding of our flesh. Where the Greeks have translated it *an adder*, the Hebrew word signifies *a lion*, and in the second member there is a repetition of one thing twice, which is common among the Hebrews. And therefore it is to no purpose to be curious in making distinction between the four several sorts, save that it is certain that by the lions and lions' whelps are betokened violent and open harms, and by adders and dragons the secret annoyances wherewith we are assailed slyly and unawares, out of the lurking-places of serpents, as it were.

14 *Because he hath, &c.*] That we may not be disgusted with so prolix a commentary, we must bear in mind what I have said before, that the prophet by this means provides for our infirmity, because we never lean steadfastly enough upon

God's providence, when any danger appears. With this design also the prophet represents God speaking in his person to confirm what he has taught before. And God, in telling us from heaven that we shall be safe under the protection of his wings, requireth of his servants only hope, for the word *חשק*, which signifies *to lust after*, or *to love*, or, as men commonly term it, *to take one's pleasure in a thing*, imports as much here as to rest sweetly upon God, and to take delight in his favour. Therefore he promiseth to be ready to succour us if we seek him with all our heart. By the way he warneth us that our life upon earth is beset with sundry deaths, unless he have his hand stretched out to preserve us. And although he oftentimes help the unbelievers also, yet is it to the faithful only that he stretcheth out his hand, in suchwise as that he is their preserver thoroughly and to the end. Aptly also is the knowledge of God's name joined to hope and longing. For the reason why men stand gazing about hither and thither, and are distracted by their own fear, is that they are ignorant of God's power, or rather, that they have not so much as lightly tasted what God is, for in his stead they dream of I know not what dead idol. Forasmuch then as the true knowledge of the name of God engenders from itself assured trust and invocation, and that God is not sincerely sought by any other than such as, embracing his promises, yield due honour to him; the prophet has with judgment and propriety set down this knowledge as the wellspring of faith. And the profitableness of this doctrine will the better appear if we consider how stupidly the papists babble about faith. For howsoever they bid men adhere thoroughly to God, yet do they bury his word, whereby the way to seek him must be opened. And although the word *exalt* signify nothing else than to preserve safe and sound, yet the reason of the metaphor is, that God doth wonderfully preserve his own, by lifting them up into a high fortress.

15 *He called upon me, &c.*] He declares more expressly what he meant by the said resting in God, or by setting his love and delight, as men term it, upon God. For the said love and longing, which spring from faith, lead us to call upon him. Whereby appears again, as I observed just now, that the true manner of praying is grounded upon God's word. For here a man may attempt nothing on his own head, but God must be sought so far forth as he allureth us to him. Meanwhile we may learn by this text, that faith is not inoperative, but is proved to be genuine by this test, when those that look for welfare at God's hand, resort directly to him. Again we are taught that the faithful shall never be

quite free from miseries and troubles, because God promiseth them not a soft and luxurious life, but that he will relieve them in their troubles. By the word *glorify* he gives us to understand that God's help, which he has hitherto talked of, shall not be temporary, but continual, even till they come to perfect bliss. True it is that he decketh them in the world, and maketh his glory apparent, but he giveth them not matter of triumphing till the course of their salvation is finished. Now as to that which he promiseth of the *length of their days* in the last verse, it seems to be an absurdity, because for the most part it happens that the faithful depart soonest out of the world. But here it behoves us to repeat what we have said heretofore, namely, that the blessings of God which belong to this transitory life, are not universal, nor flow in one unvarying course. For though he give a taste of his love in riches or other comforts, yet follows it not that he hateth the poor. Though soundness of body and robust health are his benefit, we must not therefore think he hateth the sick and feeble. In this class is also length of life, wherewith God would satisfy all his servants, but that it is better for them to depart out of the world betimes. Meanwhile they are better satisfied with a small portion of life, than the unbelievers are with ten thousand years. Thus it will never happen to any worldling to be satisfied with length of life: for though they continue a thousand years, yet are they insatiable, and swallow up life itself, without enjoying for one moment the goodness of God, which alone tranquillizes the mind. Whereupon not without cause does the prophet say that the faithful are by a singular privilege satisfied with life, to whom it is enough and more than enough to complete the race of their calling in time. And truly, since everlastingness of time is much more worth than long continuance, and that the salvation of God is in nowise included within the narrow limits of earthly life, it becomes godly men to set their minds upon that salvation chiefly, as well in life as in death. For the prophet has advisedly added this as the last wind-up of all the benefits of God, that he sheweth his salvation to the faithful after he hath plied them with his fatherly loving-kindness all their life long.

PSALM XCII.

It contains an exhortation to praise God, the ground whereof he propounds in his works; among which he chiefly commends his righteousness in defending the faithful, and his justice in destroying the reprobate, which doctrine encourages all men to the earnest following of uprightness. And, lest they should faint in bearing the cross, he warrants them a happy issue out of all their afflictions. Again, that he may deter them from wickedness, he threatens them that all the ungodly, howsoever they flourish for a time, shall soon perish.

[*A Psalm to be sung on the Sabbath-day.*]

2 It is a good thing to praise the Lord, and to sing unto thy name, O Most High :

3 To declare thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy truth in the night,

4 Upon the psaltery, and upon the viol, and upon Higgsion with the harp.

5 For thou, O Lord, hast made me glad in thy works : in the works of thy hands will I rejoice.

2 *It is a good thing, &c.*] I doubt not but they were wont to sing this Psalm upon the Sabbath-day, as the title imports; and it appears by other places that certain other Psalms were peculiarly appointed for this purpose. Now, as in the Hebrew it is written word for word, *It is good to confess*, some interpreters dwell upon the letter ל, and supply, *it is good* that some certain day should be fore-appointed to sing God's praises in; as though the prophet should say, It is a profitable order that one day was chosen for the faithful to exercise themselves in commending the works of God. But it is known that the letter ל commonly imports nothing else but to be a token of מקור, that is to say, of the infinitive mood, and therefore the sense I have given is the more natural. And it is an easy matter to give a reason why the prophet applies this doctrine to the Sabbath: for that day was not made holy, as though God were honoured by men's doing nothing, but that the people, being rid of all business, should employ themselves wholly in meditating on God's works. For such is the inconstancy of our minds, that if their attention is drawn to different objects they are easily estranged from God. Therefore, that they may apply

themselves earnestly to praising God, it is needful that they should be unencumbered by any other cares. The prophet then gives us to understand, not that the Sabbath is hallowed aright by ceasing from work, for that were too gross a matter, but that it was ordained to set forth God's praise in. And he exhorts them from the advantage of it, for nothing incites us more powerfully to our duty than when we know we lose not our labour, but that what we do is approved by God. In the next verse he ministers matter and ground of praising God, as if he should say that God would not have us praise his name for nought, or only for his greatness and mightiness, but also for his goodness and faithfulness, the feeling and experience whereof of themselves are calculated to kindle such a desire in our hearts. By which words he teaches, not only that God is worthy to be praised, but also that we are niggardly and unthankful if we fail in this behalf. For when the faithfulness and goodness of God are peculiarly directed to usward, our slothfulness is indefensible, if they do not allure and ravish our minds to the praise of him. But whereas he enjoins that God's goodness should be declared in the morning, and his truth in the night-times, it seems to be an absurd distribution. For if God be bountiful continually, and not at intervals, why shall a small portion of the day be allotted to the setting forth of this graciousness? The same may be said of the other part, for it is not in the night only that his truth appears. But the prophet speaks in another sense, that is, if we begin to praise God at break of day, we must continue his commendations to the last portion of the night, because his loving-kindness and faithfulness deserve it. And if one begin with his goodness, his truth will follow immediately. So will there be a continual succession of the two, even as there is a mutual harmony between them. The prophet therefore meant not to separate the one from the other, inasmuch as they go always jointly together; but only to teach that there is never wanting matter for praising God, unless our own dulness hinder us; and that we do not unfeignedly discharge our duty of thankfulness, unless we are continual in the same, even as he evermore continueth his goodness and faithfulness towards us. In the fourth verse he speaks peculiarly to the Levites, to whom the office of singing was enjoined, that they should also use their instruments of music; not that the same was necessary in itself, but because it was a profitable means of instruction for the people of old time. For it was not God's will that harps should be played upon, as though he took pleasure in the melody of them after the manner of men. But he kept the

Jews under those childish elements, because the time of their maturity was not yet come. And the end to which he did it, was that they should shake off their drowsiness, and address themselves the more cheerfully to praise God from their heart. For it is to be understood that God's service never consisted in those outward things, but that the rude and weak had need of these helps to worship him spiritually. At the same time also we must consider the difference between the old people and the new. For now that Christ having been set forth, the church is come to her full growth, they choke the light of the Gospel, that wrap the church still in the old shadows. Whence we gather that the papists by their musical instruments are not followers of the fathers, but apes that are foolishly still delighted with the shadowy service of the law, which the Gospel has made an end of; of which matter I shall have to treat again in other places.

5 *For thou, O Lord, &c.*] Again the prophet warns us that the Sabbath-day was not appointed that men should sit idle, but that they should concentrate all their wits on the minding of God's works. And herewith he shews, that those only are worthy and legitimate publishers of God's praises, who consider and feel his fatherly bounteousness towards them, so that they take upon them this office of devotion with free and gladsome hearts. But the prophet warns us, by the way, that if we weigh God's works aright, there we shall see his goodness and faithfulness whereof he has spoken. For hence cometh true gladness, that God sheweth himself a father towards us, and testifieth that our welfare is dear and precious in his sight, even as the cause of our brutal dulness is, that our mouths are out of taste to discern the end of God's works. Moreover, seeing that the whole frame of the world above and beneath crieth aloud that God is bountiful and truthful, let us learn wisely to give heed to these texts, that they may stir us up with holy rejoicing to set forth the praises of his name.

6 O Lord how glorious are thy works! thy thoughts are become very deep.

7 The foolish man shall not know them: neither shall the unwise man understand them.

8 When the ungodly flourish as grass, and all the workers of wickedness do blossom; that they may perish for ever.

9 And thou, O Lord, art most high for evermore.

6 *O Lord, how, &c.*] The prophet having spoken of God's

works in general, descends now to one particular; namely, that God in governing the world by his providence, although he delay the punishment of offences for a time, doth at length shew that he is not blind, how long soever he dissemble; nor yet neglecteth the welfare of his servants when he exerciseth them with the cross. And in my judgment the reason why he specially touches upon this part is, because the unseemly confusion that reigns in man's life, does more than anything throw a veil over the order of God's providence. For we see the wicked wantoning as though there were no judge in heaven, and congratulating themselves in their good fortune; and while he spareth them, they take occasion from it to run into greater licentiousness, as though they were escaped out of his hand. In addition to this temptation is our own stupidity and dulness, in concluding that God hath cast off all care of the world, and sits an unconcerned spectator in heaven: again, we know how chicken-hearted we are in enduring tribulations. Advisedly, therefore, has the prophet chosen this particular to shew how God keepeth watch and ward for the preservation of mankind. And he begins with an exclamation, because the wild disorder of our temperament confounds us so that the principle of God's proceedings is hidden from us, though it shine with unclouded brightness. First, it is to be borne in mind that the prophet discourses not here of the workmanship of heaven and earth, nor of God's general providence in the government of the world; but restrains his words to the judgments which God executeth among men. And he cries out here that God's works are glorious and his thoughts deep, verily because he ruleth mankind far otherwise than our capacity can attain to. For surely, if it lay in our choice, every man would gladly pervert the order which God maintaineth. And because it is not in our power so to do, we charge him indirectly, because he maketh no more haste, as well to deliver the faithful, as to punish the reprobates. For nothing seems less convenient than that he should sit still when they rage against him, when they run headlong into all mischief with unbridled boldness, and when at their pleasure they disquiet the good and simple; I say it seems intolerable that God should abandon his servants to the wrongs and violence of the wicked; and consequently to give a loose rein to deceitfulness, lying, robbery, slaughter, and all kind of iniquity. What is to be said of his suffering his truth to lie hid in darkness, and his own holy name to be reproachfully trampled under foot? This is the gloriousness of God's works, this is the deepness of his wisdom, which the prophet wonders at. True it is

that the depth of God's power and wisdom in the structure of the world is so great, that it far surpasses our understanding. But it was the prophet's purpose to restrain us expressly from wrangling with God, when he governeth mankind otherwise than according to our own hearts' desire. He therefore bids us to accept reverently that which is revolting to ordinary reason, because God, to prove our obedience, lifteth up his secret judgment far above our reach.

7 *The foolish man, &c.*] He adds this on purpose that we should know that the fault is in ourselves, that we yield not to God's judgments their due praise. For though he have said that they are deep mysteries, yet avouches he now that our own dulness and sloth is to blame, that they are not apparent to us. And he terms all unbelievers fools, and tacitly contrasts them with the believers, upon whom God shineth by his word and Spirit. For this folly and blindness possesses the minds of all men alike, until we are made quick-sighted by heavenly grace. And therefore, we must beseech God to clear well our eyes, that we may consider his works. Meanwhile he vindicates God's incomprehensible wisdom from contempt, condemning all such of folly and madness as disdainfully reject the same: and also calls back the faithful from the lethargy that oppresses the common sort, to apply themselves more heedfully to the consideration of God's mysteries.

8 *When the ungodly, &c.*] By a goodly and apt similitude he confutes and derides this foolishness of ours, that we think the ungodly, as it were, triumph over God himself, if they are not presently called to order. There is in his words a kind of concession, in that he confesses that they blossom and flourish. But we must mark the correction that follows immediately after, that *they flourish but for a moment, like grass*, because their felicity withers away quickly. And thus he wisely takes away and utterly removes the stumbling-block, against which almost the whole world dashes its foot, in that, in the excess of folly, we account them blessed, immediately over whose head hangs destruction. Indeed they flourish to-day, but to-morrow they shall be cut up that they may wither away. In other places we see them likened to herbs that grow upon a housetop, Ps. cxxix. 6, inasmuch as they perish of their own accord, because they want the fatness of the ground to draw sap from. But the prophet was now content with a simple similitude, that the prosperity of the wicked procures them speedier destruction, just as the ripeness of grass calls for the scythe. And here is to be noted the contrast betwixt their short

continuance and everlasting destruction; as if he should say they are not so cut off as that their root should shoot up again the next spring time, after the manner of herbs that gather freshness again when they have been cropped, but are damned to endless destruction. And when on the contrary, he says that God sitteth *high in heaven*, some take it as if he claimed for him the power and office of government, that we should not surmise that anything happens by chance, seeing that so upright a judge and ruler holdeth the government of men's affairs. Some allege one thing, and others another, but to my seeming the prophet compares the stability of God's throne with the restless revolutions of the world; as if he should say, that God is not to be deemed of by the world, wherein nothing is steady or stable, for far other is the character of him who quietly looketh down from on high upon earthly changes. Neither is this done only to distinguish God from his creatures, so that his majesty may retain its high and honoured estate, but also that we may learn to mount both above ourselves, and above the whole world, whenever we turn our thoughts to his wonderful and secret providence: for turbid is their vision that grovel still upon earth. Therefore that we may behold the judgments of God, that are not seen in the world, the prophet gives us to understand by the word *high* that God dealeth not after our pleasure, but as comports with his eternity. We, because the race of our life is short and our enterprises for the most part take not effect, and that because they are interrupted by diverse impediments, and because occasion is not always offered, are carried headlong; and according to the incessant turmoils of the world, even our faith also is disturbed and fails. The prophet therefore has set God before our eyes, sitting on his eternal and unchangeable throne, from whence he dealeth out his judgment at his own good time. This title then is not only for honour's sake referred to God's essence, but also to stay up our faith; as if it had been said, Though the faithful sigh sorrowfully upon earth and tremble, yet doth God, who is the keeper of their life, dwell for ever on high, and shield them with his everlasting power.

10 For, lo, thine enemies, O Lord, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish: all the workers of wickedness shall be destroyed.

11 And thou shalt exalt my horn as the horn of an unicorn: I am anointed with green oil.

12 Mine eye also shall see *my desire* upon mine

oppressors ; and mine ears shall hear *their desire* of them that rise up against me, and of them that trouble me.

10 *For lo, thine enemies, &c.*] He infers from the former sentence, that it is not possible but God must at length cast down his enemies ; whereby we perceive more clearly what I taught just now, that the purpose of the prophet tends to none other end than to arm our faith against all encounters, and especially to put away this stumbling-block, that many are thrust out of the right way when the prosperity of the ungodly casts a cloud over the just judgment of God. Now as in this behalf there must needs be an arduous and obstinate struggle, the prophet insists earnestly upon the confirmation of his doctrine. For very forcible is the demonstrative form of expression and the repetition. First, he avouches as confidently that God's enemies shall perish, as if their destruction were already before his eyes, and that does he confirm a second time. Whereby we gather of what advantage it was to him to reach beyond the world with the glance of faith, so that he directed his eyes to the heavenly throne of God. Therefore let us learn by his example to mount up into heaven, as often as the prosperity of the wicked shakes our faith. For presently will flow thence this lesson, that it is not possible that his enemies should continue long in a prosperous state. Therewith also the prophet determines who are the enemies of God. For he hateth no man without cause, but rather, forasmuch as they are the work of his own hands, he embraceth them with a fatherly love. But as nothing is more against his nature than unrighteousness, he denounces irreconcilable war against all the wicked. And hence the faithful draw no small comfort, when they learn that the cause of the destruction of the reprobates is, that they must needs be behated of God, who cannot deny himself. And the prophet also a little after, declares that he had set this consummation before his eyes, that by the hope thereof he might assuage all miseries, sorrows, cares, griefs, and troubles. Moreover under the figure of *oil* he betokens that he shall enjoy the blessings of God, and by *green oil* he means fresh or new oil which is not become rancid or spoiled by length of time. Also it is worthy to be noted, that he applies peculiarly to his own use, the grace of God which is common to all the godly. And in so doing he gives us to understand that general lessons are lifeless things, except each one of us, assured in himself that he is one of God's children, aspires to be partaker of the same. Finally, howsoever his

enemies trouble him, harass him now with wiles, and now with open force and violence, he assures himself of God's help, that he may persevere in the warfare of this world with exhaustless earnestness. Whereby it appears also how unadvisedly certain rabbins imagine Adam the author of this Psalm, as though really it were credible that his posterity rose up against him.

13 The righteous shall flourish as the date-tree, and he shall spread out as the cedar in Libanus.

14 Such as be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God.

15 They shall still blossom, and in their age they shall be lusty and green ;

16 That they may declare how that the Lord my rock is righteous, and that there is none iniquity in him.

13 *The righteous, &c.*] He passes again to a doctrine of general application: that though God exercise his servants with many annoyances, and put them to trouble, and plague them with miseries for a time, yet at the last upshot he sheweth that he hath not forgotten them. And no marvel though the prophet insist so carefully upon this point of doctrine, for nothing is harder for the saints than to hope for restoration when they are like dead men, and their life is hidden. Some think that by *cedars* is betokened a scent of goodly savour, and by *palms* the sweetness of fruit, but this perhaps is refining too much. The simpler sense is that though they are either withered or cut down for a time, yet they shall gather new sap and spring up again, so that they may flourish with no less lustre and dignity in the church of God than the goodliest trees upon mount Libanus. From whence they have the freshness he expresses, saying *they are planted in the house of God*; not only because they occupy a place there, (which hypocrites do as well as they,) but because having lively roots they are thoroughly grounded there, so that they cling firmly to God. When he speaks of *courts* he alludes to the form of the temple, because it was lawful for none but the priests to enter into the sanctuary, but the people worshipped in the courts. His meaning therefore is, that such as are planted in God's house, are united unto him with unfeigned and deep affection of heart, and therefore he denies that their felicity shall be transient, because it hangs not upon the world. For no doubt by settling their root in

the courts of God, he extends this flourishing of theirs to the spiritual and everlasting life. In which sense he says *they shall bud and blossom still, and be fat in old age*, which dries up the sap and natural moisture. For it is the same as if he should exempt them from the common lot of other men, or rather maintain their life against the general law of nature. So Isaiah, lxx. 20, speaking of the renewing of the church, says that in that blessed state an old man of a hundred years shall be like a child, meaning that though old age naturally inclines to decay, so that he that is a hundred years old is as good as half dead, yet under Christ the entrance into the hundredth year shall be as a childhood and a beginning to live again. Which is not otherwise fulfilled, than because after death we continue alive in heaven.

16 *That they may declare, &c.*] This clause establishes it in the clearest manner that the prophet is wholly occupied in shewing that the faithful ought to retain an undisturbed state of mind in troubles, and that though they see themselves handled severely and roughly, and the reprobates enjoying wealth and power, and also fresh and lusty, and swimming in pleasures and honour, yet they ought patiently to abide till God in due season, dispelling the darkness, put things in clear and lucid order. And he says expressly, *to declare that God is righteous*, because if God temper not worldly affairs according to our desire, our flesh not only imagines that he neglecteth the world, but also charges him with unrighteousness, as though he forsook his worshippers, and gave a license to wickedness. Now if God glorify his righteousness by punishing the reprobates, we may be well assured that whatsoever prosperity they obtain, it is but a prelude to a most wretched end. And the prophet, in calling God *his Rock*, again includes himself in the number of those to whom God will manifest his righteousness in maintaining their welfare.

PSALM XCIII.

In the commencement he sets forth God's incomprehensible glory. Afterwards he adds that God is faithful, so that he never disappointeth those that are his, who embracing his promises wait with quiet minds for salvation, amid the storms and turmoils of the world.

1 The Lord reigneth ; he hath clothed himself with majesty ; the Lord hath clothed himself with strength,

he hath girded himself: the world also hath he established, and it shall not be moved.

2 Steadfast is thy throne: thou art from everlasting.

1 *The Lord, &c.*] We see here what I touched upon lately, namely, that there is matter of truth set forth for us in the power of God. For commonly hence comes our fear and dismay, that we clothe not God with his own power, as reason would but enviously rob him of his sovereignty. Indeed we dare not do it openly; but if we were thoroughly persuaded of his almighty power, it would be an invincible support for us against all assaults of temptations. In words all men confess what the prophet teaches here, namely, *that God reigneth*: but how few are there that set this shield, as they ought to do, against all opposing powers of the world, so as they fear nothing, however formidable. Therefore it is the glory of God to govern mankind after his own discretion. He is said *to clothe himself with majesty and strength*, not that we should conceive of anything in him which is not included in his essence, but that he may by very deed, and by assured proofs, shew that he cherisheth mankind by his wonderful justice and wisdom. Moreover, that God never rejecteth the care of the world he proveth by the very creation itself. And in truth the mere sight of the world ought to suffice us for the proof of God's providence. The sky revolves daily, and yet in the immensity of such greatness there is no jarring to disturb the uniformity of its course, although so swift. The sun, though he always observe a contrary course in his daily circuit, yet ever at the year's end returns to the same point. The planets in their wanderings nevertheless forsake not their appointed place. How could the earth hang in the air if it were not stayed up by the hand of God? How could it stand immoveable in such rapid revolution of the heavens, unless she derived this steadiness from her maker? The particle **נ** therefore is full of force, as if we should say, *and doubtless*.

2 *Steadfast is thy, &c.*] Others translate, *it Thy throne is prepared*, which agrees not amiss with the text, provided we read jointly these two members, Lord, seeing thou art from everlasting, a throne hath also been set up for thee ever since that time. The interpreters will have it to be spoken simply concerning God's everlastingness, but this is poor: for in these words the prophet teaches, that as God's being is everlasting, so was he also evermore endued with

power and majesty. For under the name of *throne* he denotes, by the figure synecdoche, *justice* and *the function of government*; as these similitudes, borrowed from men, are wont for the weakness of our capacity to be improperly applied to God. And by this title of commendation the prophet refutes all gross forgeries that either annul or degrade God's might: as if he should say he were no God at all, unless he sit upon his throne, that is to say, unless he also hold the helm of the world.

3 The floods, O Lord, have lifted up, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods shall lift up their waves.

4 Terrible are the waves of the sea, for the noise of *their* great waters: *yea*, terrible is the Lord on high.

5 Exceeding true are thy testimonies; holiness is the garnishing of thy house, O Lord, in length of days.

3 *The floods, &c.*] The interpreters expound this verse various ways. Some think that here are metaphorically designated the violent assaults of the enemies that rose up against the church, and that God's grace is commended for suppressing them. Others had rather take it simply than figuratively, that though the roaring of great waters be terrible, and the waves of the sea more terrible than they, yet God is most terrible of all. As for me, as I insist not on the over-refining of the comparison, so I doubt not but that the prophet, by a graphic description, expresses here the puissance of God; as if he should say, We need not seek for any more evident assurance of God's power, that the majesty thereof may be terrible to us, than the swift course of rivers, and the tempests of the sea: even as in Ps. xxix. 4, it has been said that God's terrible voice soundeth out in the thunder. The effect is, that God, in the roaring of streams and the stormy waves of the sea, uttereth his power whereby to move us to stand in awe of him. Now if the comparison is approved of, there must be added also, that all this is nothing when we come to the majesty of God, such as it is in heaven. And yet I deny not that this sense also may be elicited from the words, That though this world seem to be disturbed by various shocks, yet is not God's power diminished, because that by his dread command he easily allayeth all disorders.

5 *Exceeding true, &c.*] Hitherto the prophet has re-

lated how wonderful God is, partly in the creation of the world, and also in the governing of mankind. Now he mentions the peculiar benefit which God hath vouchsafed to his chosen people, by setting forth the doctrine of salvation. And first he commends the law of God for its assured faithfulness and truth. But as this treasure was not offered in common to all people, presently he adds that God's house is garnished with everlasting brightness. Therefore though God's goodness extend itself to all the world, yet worthily does the prophet stand upon the commendation of this inestimable benefit of God, that he hath committed the covenant of eternal life to his church, so that his heavenly glory might shine there more fully. Some take נִחְמָה for *desirable*, as though the prophet had said that the beauty of the temple is precious: but the principles of grammar require otherwise. By the *length of days* is denoted endless succession, whereof it is also nobly said, in Isaiah, lix. 21, *Behold, I have put my word in thy mouth, in the mouth of thy seed, and of the seed that shall follow afterward*, that the heavenly doctrine may by faithful keeping flourish through many ages.

PSALM XCIV.

He calls upon God for help against the wicked and violent, that oppressed the saints tyrannously and cruelly. And no doubt he speaks of domestic oppressors, whose wrongful domination was no less a trouble and annoyance to the saints, than were all the injuries of the heathen.

1 O Lord God of vengeance, O God of vengeance, shew thyself.

2 Advance thyself, thou Judge of the earth; give the proud their reward.

3 Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?

4 They blab, they talk stoutly, all the workers of iniquity advance themselves.

5 They tread down thy people, O Lord, and trouble thine heritage:

6 They murder the widow and the stranger, and slay the fatherless.

1 *O Lord God of vengeance, &c.*] It is certain the Jews were hemmed in by bad neighbours, and moreover that they were so many fierce enemies, who ceased not to vex and

weary them. But as while the wicked lorded it at their pleasure, their inward sorrow grieved them sore, with reason does the prophet cry to God to remedy so deadly a mischief. The manner of speech is ordinary enough, *that God appeareth evidently*, and is advanced on high, when he sheweth himself a revenger by manifest effect: For then seemeth he to get him to his judgment-seat to take punishment of offences, and to shew forth his power to the world by compelling them to order. And that is said in respect of us, for we perceive not that he hath a care of us, further than he openly, and as it were visibly, stretcheth forth his hand to help us. When he is twice called *the God of vengeance*, and afterwards *the judge of the earth*, these peculiar titles pertain properly to the circumstance of the present case, as though the prophet should put him in mind of his duty with these words: Lord, it is thy office to punish the wicked, and to judge the earth, and thou seest that as long as their iniquity reigns without control, they triumph with froward boldness. Not that God, who never forgetteth himself, needeth any warning, nay rather, tempereth his judgments while he seemeth to make long lingerings: but in this-wise the faithful consider his nature with themselves, to encourage themselves to better hope, and to spur themselves forward to earnestness in praying, to which purpose pertains also the repetition of the words. Therefore, the more frowardly the wicked riot, let us always bethink us of this lesson, that nevertheless it cannot be taken from God, that he is judge of the world to take punishment of wickedness. And though, according to our fleshly understanding, God lieth hid in darkness, yet let us not scruple to take hold of this form of praying, which is endited by the Holy Ghost; namely, that he should beam upon us at length.

3 *Lord, how long, &c.*] Thus the prophet excuses his own heat, because it was high time to make haste, as the wicked put no bounds to their pride. Therefore, as our necessity ought to give us courage, so that we may know that just prayers will be heard, the prophet testifies here that his complaint proceeds not from nought, or a light cause, but that it is forced from him by most grievous wrongs. Also the circumstance of the time avails to augment the heinousness of the matter, in that they had become hardened through the long sufferance of God, and that by their hardness they had not only grown stubborn, but also shameless, as though God favoured their wickedness. For in the adverb *how long* twice repeated, there is denoted a continual delay of punishment, as if he had said that this is not the first beginning of the ungodly, but that there are no

bounds to their misbehaviour, because they have been borne with too long. Now seeing that the reprobates have exercised such tyranny in the church of old, and God hath not redressed it forthwith, let us not marvel if the church at this day be subject to long oppressions, neither let us think it utterly forsaken of God, though he set not his hand to redress her wrongs immediately. By the word *triumph*, he denotes a gladness full of frowardness and bragging, when the wicked, inebriated with long prosperity, believe they may do what they list.

4 *They prate, &c.*] He expresses the same thing more plainly, that is, that they swell with such pride that they scruple not to boast of their wickedness. The word נָבַע, which we have translated *to prate*, is more than to talk or speak. For as properly it signifies *to gush out*, it is by a metaphor transferred to unadvised talking. And we see whither the ambition and pride of ungodly persons carries them, so that they fondly vaunt themselves of their puissance, even when coupled with their own great reproach and shame. For in their menaces they creak of nothing but slaughters, extortion, and barbarous cruelty. These are the ebullitions whereof the prophet speaks, when the wicked, forgetting shame and modesty, scruple not to brag that they will do whatsoever they list. And this is the hardness of speech which neither reason nor fear, nor regard of honesty can restrain from forcing its way whithersoever unbridled license impel it. Now as it was a grievous temptation to the faithful in old time to see the government of the church in utter disorder, so are we now-a-days taught that there happens no new thing whenever the church is governed untowardly, or rather oppressed, but that we must call upon God, who, after long delay, is wont to help his servants in the end.

5 *They tread down, &c.*] After he has spoken of their inebriate and insolent bragging in words, he describes also their doings, that they outrageously persecute the church of God. Now if it be a shame that subjects should be wrongfully oppressed by heathen kings, surely much more is it intolerable that the chosen people of God, which are his peculiar heritage, should be trodden down by tyrannic power. Moreover, let us bear in mind that this form of praying is enjoined us as often as wicked persons, and especially domestic enemies, are troublesome to us, and to the rest of the faithful. For as our welfare is not only regarded of God, because we are men, and created by him, but also precious in his sight, because he accounteth us his peculiar possession; if we suffer any wrong, we may the more familiarly resort to

him. There follows another aggravation, that they *spare not even widows, and that they murder the fatherless and the strangers*. But God, after he hath commanded us in general terms to maintain righteousness and equity one with another, chiefly, however, giveth us charge of the widows, the strangers, and the fatherless, because the more they are exposed to harm, the more they deserve to be favoured and pitied. So much the more, therefore, does their wickedness and contempt of God betray itself, when by their outraging them, not only the common law of nature is violated, but also the special privilege which God vouchsafeth to give them for the protection of their welfare. And therefore those that rise up cruelly against them, provoke God's wrath the more against themselves. And truly in children, because they are not able to defend themselves, even the weakness of their age is a defence to them against dogs and wild beasts. How shameful and monstrous a thing then is it for men to try their strength against them? Thus we see, as it were in a glass, what hideous devastation was made in the church at that time. Then were the law and the judgments appointed by God in force, and yet we see how horribly all kinds of wickedness overflowed. Therefore, we must take diligent heed that nothing of the kind come to pass with us; but if it happen that strangers are wrongfully harassed, widows made a prey, and orphans despoiled, we must beseech God to take upon him the charge of them, according as the prophet, by his own example, exhorts us to relieve their miseries.

7 And they said, God shall not see it, the God of Jacob shall not know it.

8 Understand ye, O ye unwise among the people: and, ye fools, when will ye be wise?

9 He that hath planted the ear, shall he not hear? or he that hath made the eye, shall he not see?

10 Or he that chastiseth nations, shall he not correct? he that teacheth men wisdom.

7 *And they said, &c.*] When the prophet says that the wicked mock God, as though they had sealed up his eyes, it must not be understood as though they distinctly conceived this purpose in their minds; but because they despise his judgment just as if he were touched with no care of mankind. For were it thoroughly graven on men's hearts that they cannot escape the sight of God, it would be a suf-

ficient bridle to restrain their conduct. Therefore, as they rush into such an extreme of boldness, that they strip one, and rob another, and devour a third, it is certain that they are drowned in their own insensibility, as if they were hidden from the eyes of God. Doubtless such supine indifference shews that they sin as if they should never be called to render an account of their life. Although, therefore, they dare not pour out such gross blasphemies, as to say that God is ignorant of all things, and in manner like a trunk, yet does the prophet justly reproach them with thinking the world is not ruled by God's providence, nay rather disposing him of the office and authority of a judge. For were they persuaded as became them of God's providence, they would therewith yield him such honour as might keep them in reverent fear and awe of him; of which I have treated more at large heretofore. The prophet's purpose is to express extreme and abandoned depravity; namely, when the sinner, having shaken off the fear of God, allows himself to do what he will. If a heathen man, that never tasted at all of the heavenly doctrine, should make such vaunts, it were a madness not to be borne with. A horrible portent was it, therefore, that men brought up from their childhood in the doctrine of the law should so despitefully mock God or beguile him.

8 *Understand ye, O ye unwise, &c.*] Inasmuch as it is abominable blasphemy to deprive God of the office of a judge, the prophet inveighs more vehemently against the dulness of those that believe they may escape from his judgment, or rather beguile him with their subtleties. And it is a severer thing to call them *the fools among the people*, than to call them simply *fools*, because such folly was less excusable in the children of Abraham, of whom Moses had said, Deut. iv. 7, *What people is so noble, that hath gods near about them, like as thy God cometh this day down to thee? For this is your understanding before all nations, and your wisdom, that you have God to be your lawmaker.* Unless perchance he term those the despised among the people, who notwithstanding were the heads of them, and held the highest degree of honour, as if he should call them of the common herd. For it is profitable and needful that the proud, whom their own dignity blinds, should so be called to order, as that they may perceive that there is no better account made of them before God than of any one taken promiscuously from the people. And surely he seems to degrade them to the level of the mean people, that they should cease to pique themselves upon their own haughtiness, save that he ironically rebukes their stateliness; as if

he should say, the chief mark to know them by is that they surpass all others in foolishness; for so much implies the interrogation, *When will ye be wise?* When he demands whether God, who made the ears, could not hear, he seems but tamely to assert God's providence against the wicked, for no man is so brutish as utterly to take away all knowledge from God. But as I said just now, the gross boldness the greater part of the world indulge in, is a witness that those who rush so recklessly against God, imagine him to be but a dead idol. For if they believed in earnest that he seeth and marketh their doings, they would at least yield him no less honour than they yield to mortal men, through fear and reverence of whom they are restrained from doing amiss. Well, therefore, to shake off this drowsiness does the prophet reason from the order of nature, that men being endued with sight and hearing, since this faculty is given them by God that made them, it is not possible that anything should be hid from him, who hath created as well the ears as the eyes.

10 *He that chastiseth, &c.*] It is an argument from the greater to the less, that it is not possible that God, who spareth not whole nations, but punisheth their sins, should pass by a few men unpunished: though it may be also a comparison of the Gentiles with the Jews. For if God exercised severity towards the Gentiles, that were ignorant of his law, much more grievous punishment deserve the Jews, whom God hath trained up familiarly in his own school; because as he reigneth over his chosen people, so is it reasonable that his justice should shine forth there more clearly. Nevertheless, I rather embrace the former sense, that it is folly for a few men to promise themselves impunity when they see God punish all the nations openly. Some restrain this to the signal and memorable instances of his vengeance that are read of in the scripture, such as when God destroyed Sodom with fire from heaven, and all mankind with the flood: Gen. xix. 7. But I had rather take it more simply; namely, that the wilfulness of those is extravagantly perverse that hope to escape when whole nations perish. What he adds afterwards, that *it is he who teacheth men wisdom*, avails to rebuke the presumption of those who seek the praise of keenness or sagacity from contemning God; as Isaiah, xxvi. 13, curses those sly contemners that dig themselves burrows wherein to hide them from the sight of God. And would God the world were not overrun with the same disease now-a-days also! But we see with what pretences courtiers as well as lawyers cloud their minds, so that they dare without any shame scoff at God. You, for-

sooth, says he, trusting to your own wits, try to elude God, as though it lay in your power to bereave him of knowledge who droppeth down into the world but a few particles of his own fulness.

11 The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men, that they be vain.

12 Blessed is the man whom thou, O God, instructest, and whom thou teachest in thy law ;

13 To give him rest in the days of evil, while the pit is a digging for the wicked.

11 *The Lord knoweth, &c.*] Again he girds at the false reasonings of men, who hope to escape the eyes of God when they overcast themselves with mists. Therefore, that they may cease flattering themselves under this vain pretence, he warns them that those clouds will soon be chased away when they shall be come into the presence of God. Whence it follows, that it profits them not at all, considering that God from heaven condemneth as vain whatsoever they devise in their craft. For in citing them to God's judgment-seat, he draws them back to the test of their own conscience. For whence comes their carelessness, but because they turn their backs upon God, burying all distinction of good and evil, and as much as in them lies, laying aside all reason. While they sooth themselves so fondly, the prophet tells them flatly, that God laugheth at such childish toys. It is a well known and oft repeated sentence, nevertheless it is worth the labour, to consider the meaning of the prophet, which many pass over negligently; namely, that the ungodly while they invent subterfuges deceive themselves, because they cannot beguile God with their subtlety. Some translate it, *they themselves are vanity*, but it is too forced; for the expression is as well Hebrew as Greek, which must be resolved thus; God knoweth the thoughts of men to be vain.

12 *Blessed is the man, &c.*] Now the prophet passes from rebuking to comforting, as well of himself as of all the godly; that God doth it for their welfare, when he suffereth them to be afflicted for a time: a most profitable doctrine through the whole course of our life, which we must pass in continual warfare. For admit that God, bearing with our infirmity, grant us some relief, yet will he have us always subject to many wrongs: and we see how great the frowardness of the ungodly is. Most miserable, therefore, were our care without this comfort, That blessed are they whom God

exerciseth with the cross. When God hath gathered us to be his own people, he seemeth to have detached us from the rest of the world, that we should all of us enjoy blissful peace by exercising righteousness and equity among ourselves. But it often happens that under pretence of high authority, tyrants oppress the church wickedly. And such was the temptation that the prophet has complained of in this Psalm; for he accuses none other than domestic enemies, who professed to be judges of the people. Here fleshly reason tells us, if God regarded us he would never give them such liberty to do what they list. But the prophet exclaims on the contrary, that we must fetch our wisdom elsewhere than from our own brain, and that we have need of the heavenly wisdom. For thus I interpret this passage, that it cannot come to pass that we should stand with quiet minds when adversities distress us, and patiently wait for God's help, otherwise than if God train us in his school. For the prophet confesses that men are not so wise naturally as to proceed to the mark with quiet minds through continual afflictions, but that this wisdom is given them of God. And therefore he cries out that they are blessed whom God by the doctrine of his law hath inured to the enduring of the cross, and also whom he stayeth up by the secret comfort of his Spirit, that they sink not under adversity. For when he says first, *Blessed is he whom thou instructest*, I extend it to the inward gift of enlightening. But by and by the prophet adds, that this wisdom which God giveth us by inward inspiration, is also set forth and displayed in the law. By which title he commends the use of outward teaching; according also as Paul says, Rom. xv. 4, that *all things are written for our learning, that we might have hope through patience and comfort of the Scriptures*. Now we see out of what fountain patience is to be drawn; namely, God's word, which yields us matter of hope by mitigating our griefs. To be short, it is the prophet's purpose, first to exhort the faithful to patience, that they should not be fainthearted in persecution, but with quietness and silence wait for deliverance at God's hand; and secondly, to give them to understand whence this wisdom is to be fetched. For as our flesh urges us continually to despair, our hope would vanish a hundred times, unless we knew by God's teaching, that all miseries shall turn to our welfare. By the way he declares, that God's law yields us true matter of comfort, so that whosoever has profited therein, can never despair, quail, or account himself wretched. For the badge whereby God discerneth his true disciples from the counterfeit; is this, if they are ready and have their minds made up

to bear the cross, and neither repine nor struggle, but hope for deliverance quietly. And surely the true sort of patience is, not obstinately to set ourselves against adversities, according as the Stoics commend stubborn firmness for a virtue, but to submit ourselves to God willingly, because we lean upon his gracious goodness. With judgment therefore, does the prophet begin with this foundation; that the faithful may learn that they are afflicted for a moment, that when they have gone through with their warfare, they may obtain a blessed rest. He could have said that those are blessed who have by the law of God learned to endure the cross with resignation. But he has set down a comfort, wherewith men's minds are mitigated, that they may peaceably submit themselves to God's pleasure. For though a man in adversity withhold himself from tears and sighs, if he champ the bit without hope, and only hold to these principles, that we are mortal, that it is in vain to resist necessity or to strive against destiny, and that fortune is blind; it is rather stubbornness than patientness, because in the meanwhile he that despises adversities under the pretence of manliness, could find in his heart to kick against God. But to subdue our minds to meekness, there is no other doctrine but this, that when God delivereth his servants into trouble he provides this for their tranquillity. And where this belief reigns, that rest and relief is then preparing for the faithful, when they are in the heat of adversity, because they should not perish with the world, it will be of sufficient force to allay the bitterness of any grief, howsoever great. In this manner, by *evil days*, or *days of evil*, the prophet would mean the endless damnation which awaits all the reprobates, after God hath spared them for awhile. The prophet's words may be expounded thus also; Blessed is he that has learned to be quiet and tranquil in affliction. Thus the inward stillness which the faithful enjoy even in the midst of all storms will be denoted. The meaning of which text would be this; Blessed is the man that has so far profited in God's law, that he endures all assaults of misfortunes with a quiet and well-settled mind. But as immediately there follows, *while the grave is a digging for the ungodly*, that the contrary members of the sentence may be answerable one to another, the prophet seems to praise the wisdom of them that account themselves afflicted of God that they might be saved from destruction and at length enjoy a happy end. Again, it was necessary that this other part of the comfort should be added. For it cannot be but that our hearts boil over with the excessive heat of grief, when the ungodly triumph, and God restraineth them not.

Seasonably, therefore, does the prophet prevent it, giving us to understand that the wicked are left upon the earth as a corpse laid out in a chamber lies still there till the grave be made for it. And by these words he shews that the faithful cannot else abide steadfastly, unless they get them up into the *watch-tower*, as the prophet Habakkuk terms it, ii. 1, and from thence descry God's judgments afar off. They will see the ungodly enjoy earthly delights, and if they extend not their consideration yet further, they will faint with indignation. But if they bethink them that the houses which are appointed for the quick, are for a little while granted to the dead, while their grave is a digging for them, so also they abide above ground, who notwithstanding are damned already to destruction, this comfort will suffice to assuage their heaviness.

14 Truly the Lord will not cast away his people, nor forsake his inheritance.

15 For judgment shall return to justice, and all the upright in heart after him.

14 *Truly the Lord, &c.*] He confirms the former sentence more evidently, denying it to be possible that God should cast away the people he had chosen to be his heritage. And as often as we are tempted with adversities this must be as our holy sanctuary, that we are nevertheless God's people, because he hath freely adopted us, and therefore that our salvation and welfare are dear and precious in his sight. For it is not for nought that he hath promised to be as diligent a keeper of his church, as of a peculiar heritage. Whereby we gather again, that patience fails, and vanishes away, except the knowledge of grace shine upon us, to appease all the uproars of the flesh.

15 *For judgment, &c.*] Because in the darkness of afflictions it is not easy to espy that love wherewith God secretly plieth his people, the prophet uses another argument, that is, that after this scene of trouble and confusion, God will at length settle things in due order. Because the phrase of the prophet is somewhat obscure, some read these two things severally, that is, first, *justice shall return to the end*, and then, *judgment shall return*. But by this means they wrest the text, and tear it in pieces. I therefore doubt not to take it as if it had been said, Judgment shall be applied, or made conformable to justice. And *judgment* in this place, as in many others, is taken for government or public administration. Now as the state of government seems unjust and perverted,

because things are disordered in the world, therefore he promises a better issue. And he not only says that men who before tyrannised inordinately shall return to upright dealing, but he penetrates deeper, that the Lord will at length, in restoring the church, manifest the justice which he had hidden; not that his providence doth ever in the least depart from right order, but because in respect of men, there appears not always such moderation and adaptation of things that his justice may be evidently seen; for government is said to be just when inequality is corrected. For as the light is hidden in the night, or in cloudy weather, so when the wicked vex good men tyrannously, and loose reins are given to their lusts and crimes, the mists that get between us and God's providence, obscure the light of equity, and so judgment is after a sort dismembered from justice. But when things are brought again into due order, then appears a perfect harmony of power and justice in a regulated equality. It becomes us indeed, when things are in disorder, to take hold of God's justice, though it be hidden, by faith; but that God's justice shall shine as it were in a cloudless sky, is referred to actual feeling and experience. *All the upright shall follow after him.* Some translate it *after it*, meaning *justice*. But as this word *justice* is taken for upright and orderly government, when God taketh vengeance of the wicked and delivereth his servants, that exposition seems not to apply. I like better therefore to understand it of God himself, and thus it will be a relative without an antecedent. For it is no rare thing among the Hebrews, when mention is made of God, to put the relative instead of his name. The meaning then is, that all the righteous, when God shall have settled the state of the world, shall take courage to follow him more cheerfully. For although they aspire towards him even in bearing the cross through the midst of miseries and afflictions, yet when they feel him to be their deliverer, and see his hand to be such, they devote themselves to him more unreservedly.

16 Who will rise up with me against mine adversaries? Who will take my part against the workers of iniquity?

17 If the Lord had not helped me, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.

18 If I said, My foot hath slipped, thy goodness, O Lord, hath held me up.

19 In the multitude of my thoughts, in the midst of me, thy comforts have cheered my heart.

16 *Who will rise up, &c.*] Here the prophet as it were by a graphic representation shews how greatly he was destitute of man's help. For as it were in an affair actually occurring, he cries out, *Who will stand on my side?* or, *Who will set himself against mine enemies?* And immediately he answers himself that if God had not helped him it had been all over with him. And it avails to enlarge God's gracious goodness when he declares that he was rescued by miracle from death, because he was forsaken of the whole world. For though men when they stretch out their hand to us, are but the ministers of God's gracious goodness, yet as often as our eyes light upon any secondary succour, we do not easily acknowledge it to be God's hand. Moreover, *life* is said to *dwell in silence*, when the dead lie in the grave, void of sense and strength. Therefore the prophet confesses that he had no remedy to save his life, if God had not stretched forth his hand to him out of heaven.

18 *If I said, &c.*] It is a confirmation of the former sentence. For the better to commend God's goodness and might, he avouches himself to have been delivered not from some moderate peril, but as it were from present death. And the meaning of the words is, that death hovered so before his eyes that in his own judgment he was past all recovery; like as Paul, 2 Cor. i. 9, says he had received the message of death in himself, when all hope being cut off, he gave up his life. Now as the prophet, who had given himself over to death, was delivered contrary to all hope, so much the more manifest was the help of God. Furthermore, if we understand *the slipping of the foot* to be spoken of temporal death only, there will be no absurdity at all in the desperation of the prophet, because God oftentimes prolongeth the life of his servants in this world, though being past all hope of life they are ready to depart. Nevertheless, it may be that the prophet restrains this *his saying* to the understanding of the flesh, which I take to be the more likely because we have seen before that he never ceased from calling upon God; whence it follows that he hoped for somewhat, and that is gathered more apparently from the next verse, where he reports that his sorrows were always allayed with some comfort. For by his *thoughts* he means his sorrowful and perplexing cares, wherewith he had been overwhelmed if some comfort had not been ministered to him from God. This passage therefore teaches that God succoureth his servants even at the very pinch, according to the greatness of their sorrow and heaviness, to set them at large out of their distress, as is said in Psalm iv. 2, and cxviii. 5. Therefore the more our miseries weigh us down, the more let us

hope that his grace shall be the mightier in abating our griefs. But if, through the weakness of the flesh, cares and griefs distress and torment us, let this remedy which the prophet extols so highly, suffice us. For the faithful bear a twofold affection in their hearts. For on the one side they are vexed, yea, and are distracted by sundry fears and cares; but God breatheth secret gladness into them, and that according to the measure of their necessity, so that no gulf of miseries, howsoever deep, may swallow them up.

20 Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee? which forgeth trouble instead of law?

21 They will meet together against the life of the righteous, and condemn the blood of the guiltless.

22 But the Lord hath been my fortress; and my God hath been the rock of my assurance.

23 And he shall recompense their wickedness upon themselves, and destroy them in their naughtiness; even the Lord our God shall destroy them.

20 *Shall the throne, &c.*] He gathers assurance again from the nature of God, because it is not possible that he should either favour the wicked or consent to their ungracious devices. And how then should they escape destruction, seeing that God is against them? But more vehemence is there in the interrogation, which teaches that all iniquity is contrary to the nature of God. And he makes mention of the *throne* purposely, because he arraigns not common cut-throats and thieves, whose infamy is known everywhere, but inveighs against the tyrants that oppressed God's church under false pretence of the law. He says, therefore, that though they sit in that throne which is consecrated to God, yet have they nothing at all to do with him, as they defile and contaminate the throne with their wicked deeds. He explains himself more clearly in the other member, where he avouches all such to be mere strangers to God, as forge trouble instead of law. The word *דִּין* signifies a law and decree, or an established order. The prophet therefore lashes wicked judges, who, reigning through all kind of oppression, nevertheless pretend to hold the right course of duty. For so false judges invent sundry glosses to cover the wickedness of their tyranny, that they may keep still possession of an honourable and specious title. Now we perceive what the prophet meant; namely, that although the name of *throne* be honourable, yet when it is

marred by the depravity of men, it loses its estimation and honour with God, who cannot give his consent to iniquity.

21 *They will meet, &c.*] As the word גָּרַר or גָּרַר signifies *to levy an army, or to assemble a band of men*, there is no doubt the prophet means that he was not troubled by common persons, but by the lords of the people, that had a powerful sway. By this word also he expresses that he and the rest of the faithful were wrongfully misused, not by one or two private persons, but by the public assembly. A sorrowful yea and a shameful example was it that the wicked should reign in a lawful assembly, so that the college of judges should be nothing but a band of thieves. For it is a double shame that guiltless persons, when they are oppressed, should together with their wrong sustain reproach also. And then what is less beseeeming than that the whole forensic system should be nothing else but a conspiracy to condemn the innocent. But it behoves us to be armed with this example at this day, if God give the wicked so much liberty as to mount up into the judgment-seat under pretence of law, to the undoing of the good and simple. Although therefore it be not tolerable at the first blush, that guiltless persons should be cruelly vexed, yea and also oppressed with reproach by the judges themselves, yet as God hath exercised his servants with both these temptations in old time, let us learn to bear with equanimity not only wrongful violence but also the shameful slanders wherewith we are charged undeservedly.

22 *But the Lord, &c.*] The prophet concludes that though he were brought to so great distress, yet was there help enough for him in God alone; by which words he magnifies his power again, for that he alone had subdued such powerful attempts, so great armies, and such furiousness. And he not only says that God was to him as good as a fortress, from whence he might behold all their assaults, and where he might shroud himself in safety; but when he has congratulated himself on the protection of God, he denounces destruction to his enemies also, because it is the peculiar office of God to hurl back upon their own heads whatsoever trouble they menace to good men. If their attempts should only be prevented and disappointed, God would even in so doing give some taste of his justice; but when they fall into the pit which they prepared, and perish in their own wiliness, while they slyly seek all ways possible to destroy the good; and when they have tried all their strength, slay themselves with their own swords, then God's wonderful judgment appears the better. And because this is hard to be believed, he repeats twice, *He will destroy them, even*

our God will destroy them. In which place also it is be-hoveful to note that when the prophet says *our God*, there is matter of hope given to the faithful; for he brings to mind again what he said before, namely, that God neglecteth not his heritage, which he hath taken under his protection.

PSALM XCV.

The prophet, (whosoever he was that was author of this Psalm,) minding to exhort the Jews in a solemn assembly to the praising of God, propounds twofold matter; namely, because by his power he maintaineth the world which he hath created, and also because he hath freely adopted the church to himself. But as feigned praises sounded in many men's lips, he therewith also exhorts the people to devote themselves sincerely, earnestly, and wholly unto God, and to testify by their life that they are not elected in vain. And to shake off all hypocrisy, he says that their fathers had been thankless and disobedient unto God from the beginning, and reports that horrible punishment was inflicted on them, which ought of right to deter their posterity from following their stubbornness.

1 Come, let us rejoice unto the Lord, let us sing loud to the rock of our welfare.

2 Let us come before his face with praise, let us sing loud unto him in songs.

3 For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

4 For in his hand are the borders of the earth, and the height of the hills is his also.

5 For the sea is his, and he made it; and his hands formed the dry land.

1 *Come, let us rejoice, &c.*] This Psalm is applicable to the Sabbath-day, in which we know that solemn assemblies were peculiarly kept to set forth the glory of God. For he exhorts not each one of the godly to praise God alone by himself, but he enjoins it to be done in the general assembly. And so he shews that the outward worship of God consists not in dead ceremonies, but chiefly in the sacrifice of praise. Also he requires alacrity at the hands of the faithful, thereby to testify that they perform this duty cheerfully. For the word קדם which he uses, signifies *to make haste*, or *speed*. Therefore he bids them make haste to come into God's presence; which was needful, considering the sluggishness inherent in our nature, at such times as God calleth us to

give him thanks. Now as the prophet indirectly rebukes the slothfulness of the people of old time in singing praises to God, so let us know that we have need of the same spur at this day also, because we are no less unthankful than they were. Neither profited it a little to the stirring up of the people's devotion, when he bade them come forth into God's presence. For nothing is more to be wished than to offer in God's presence the sacrifice that God declareth to be most acceptable to him. For this manner of speech imports as much as if he had said that God is present before their faces as a witness, lest they might think themselves to lose their labour. And as for God's presence in the sanctuary, I have shewn elsewhere of what sort it was.

3 *For the Lord, &c.*] By these words the prophet gives us to understand that there is plenty enough of matter to praise God for, so that he needeth no forged commendations after the manner in which rhetoricians are wont to flatter kings. First he extols God's greatness, tacitly contrasting him with all the imaginary gods that men forge to themselves. We know there has always been a great rabble of gods in the world, whence comes the saying of St. Paul, 1 Cor. viii. 5, that many on earth are called gods. We must therefore consider the contrast between the God of Israel and all the other gods which men's lust has forged to themselves. If any man except that an idol is nothing, 1 Cor. viii. 4, I answer that by this sentence the prophet reproves the fond errors of men that foolishly imagine godheads at their own pleasure. And yet I willingly comprehend the angels under this name; as if he should say that God excelleth in such wise that he far surpasses all heavenly glory and whatsoever is divine, no less than he transcendeth all earthly forgeries. Indeed angels are no gods: but as they approach more nearly to God, this name *god* is improperly transferred to them, especially in respect of men, who through extravagant admiration exalt them superstitiously. But if the majesty of God alone compel the angels of heaven to obedience, what a shame is it that forgeries that are as nought should stand in the way of his glory. Afterwards he sets forth a handsel of this greatness, to be seen in the workmanship of the world, when he says it is the work of God's hand, and subject to him. And it is a general commendation, that God hath manifested his glory in the creation of the world, and desireth to be recognised daily in the government thereof. For when he says that *the entrails of the earth are in his hand*, he means that it is ruled by his prudence, and subject to his command. Others translate it *borders*,

but he rather means *depths*, which he contrasts with the loftiness of the mountains.

6 Come, let us worship and fall down, and kneel before the face of the Lord our Maker.

7 For he is the Lord our God; and we are the people of his pastures, and the flock of his hand: if ye hear his voice, to-day.

6 *Come, let us worship, &c.*] Because the prophet now exhorts the chosen people to thankfulness, since by the free benefit of God they excel all the heathen, his talk is the more earnest; according as God ministereth to us more pregnant matter of praise when he vouchsafeth spiritual honour to us, and without our deserving preferreth us before all other men. Therefore he designates one thing by three words, and that, in order that the children of Abraham should devote themselves wholly to him. True it is indeed that the service of God which the prophet preaches of is of so great moment, that it worthily claims all our endeavours. But the circumstance must be noted that he commends God's fatherly love wherewith he embraced the children of Abraham only, to adopt them into the hope of the spiritual and everlasting life. This also is to be noted, that not only the thankfulness of the heart is treated of here, but also that therewith is required the outward profession of godliness. For the thing expressed in the three words *come, worship, and kneel*, is that the faithful discharge not themselves of their duty, unless they openly offer themselves in sacrifice to God, both with bowing of the knee, and with other signs. I take *the face of God* in the sense that I spoke of just now, that is, that the people should cast themselves down before the ark of the covenant, because he speaks of the worship of the law. Nevertheless, this exception must always be added, that the faithful must lift up their eyes to heaven and worship God spiritually.

7 *For he is our God, &c.*] Though all mankind were created to this end, yet not without cause is the church termed God's *planting* to his praise. Of right therefore does the prophet require this duty specially of his elect people. And this is the cause that he puts the children of Abraham in mind of the inestimable privilege which God vouchsafed to them when he took them under his protection. For though this might after a sort be referred to all

mankind, yet is it certain that God is called the shepherd of his church, not in such sort as he feedeth, upholdeth, and governeth the residue of men without difference, but because he hath distinguished it from the whole world to cherish it in his fatherly bosom. Therefore they are called *the people of his pastures* whom God defendeth with his peculiar care, and whom he endueth with all kinds of benefits. He might indeed have spoken more distinctly in calling them *the flock of his pastures*, and *the people of his hand*; or had he used only the name of the law, the metaphor would have been kept up. But he cared not so much for the fineness of his language, provided he might put the people in remembrance of their inestimable grace of adoption, the end whereof was, that they should live under the guardianship and protection of God, and enjoy all good things. They are termed *the flock of God's hand*, not so much because they were created by him, as because they are governed by his hand. In French they term it *Le troupeau de sa conduite*. Now though the antithesis which many observe (namely, that God is heedful in feeding his people himself, and useth not hireling shepherds) be peradventure somewhat more curious than the natural meaning of the prophet may bear, yet it is not to be doubted that the prophet meant to express that near and familiar manner of government which at that time appeared in that one people only. Not that God utterly rejected the service of men, for he committed the government of his people to priests, prophets, judges, and afterwards to kings; but because he executed the office of a shepherd after another sort among that people, than he did by his general providence in the rest of the world besides. *If ye hear his voice to-day*. According to the Hebrews this condition is added to the last sentence, as if the prophet should tell the people that they should not else continue in the possession of their dignity and privilege, unless they continued in their obedience to God. The Greek translator has joined it to the verse following, that is, *Harden not your hearts*; which sentence hangs together very well. Nevertheless, if you approve of the distinction which the Hebrews make, the prophet meant to declare that the children of Abraham are therefore the flock of God's hand, because God had set up his law, as it had been a shepherd's hook in the midst of them, thereby to shew himself to be their shepherd. And so the particle *DN, if*, will not import a condition, but an exposition; or else it will be taken for an adverb of time; as if it had been said, that the badge of difference between the Jews and the Gentiles is, that God directed his voice to the Jews, ac-

ording as it is said in another place, that he hath not dealt so with all other nations; Ps. cxlvii. 20. And Moses, Deut. iv. 6, 7, had said before, *This is your nobleness in the sight of other nations. For what nation is there under heaven, that hath their gods so near about them?* Now the prophets are wont to borrow many things from Moses, as is known well enough. And in the adverb *to-day* the prophet points out emphatically that the Jews are God's people, seeing that they heard his voice; and that they need not to seek far for witness, it appears before them, and abides still in the sight of their eyes. He bids them therefore acknowledge him for their shepherd, in that they hear his voice, because it comes of his singular grace that he vouchsafeth to speak to them so familiarly. Others translate it *would God*, and will have it to be an adverb of exhortation, but I am afraid it is too constrained. But the other runs well, that seeing God's voice soundeth continually in their ears, and that he hath not shewn a token of his shepherdly care to their fathers once only, or reneweth a memorial of it only once a year, but continueth this his office without ceasing, it is made evident enough that the Jews are chosen to be his flock.

8 Harden not your heart as in Meriba, according to the day of Massa in the wilderness.

9 When your fathers tempted me, and proved me, when notwithstanding they had seen my work.

10 Forty years long was I at strife with this generation; and I said, They are a people that err in heart: and they have not known my ways.

11 Wherefore I sware in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest.

8 *Harden not, &c.*] Because they were stiff-necked and hard to be brought to obedience, after he has exalted and commended God's grace in the office of shepherd, so on the other side he counsels them to prove themselves to be the flock of his sheep, by their willingness to learn and by their gentle meekness. And that they may be touched the more effectually, he upbraids them with the stubbornness of their fathers. Now, though the word *Meriba* may be an appellative, so that it may signify *strife*, or *contention*, yet as there is no doubt the prophet has an eye to the history which is recorded in Exod. xvii. 2, and 7, I chose rather to refer it to a place: the same observation applies also to the word

Massa. Nevertheless, as in the second member there is added the name *wilderness*, to mark the place of the temptation, if any man like better to translate it, *according to the day of temptation*, I will not oppose him. Neither indeed is it needful that we should be curious in so small a matter. For I do not agree with those who would have them to be two different places. Afterwards he sets forth the hard-heartedness of the people in many words; that what he says may have the more force, he brings in God speaking. And, no doubt, under the hardening of the heart the prophet denotes any manner of contempt of God's word, although there be many and sundry sorts of it. For when it is held out to the world, we see it is by some hearkened to but coldly, by others fastidiously loathed; by some scornfully rejected, and by others also furiously (yea, and not without reproach and blasphemy) railed at. Therefore, whereas of hearers some be slothful, some fastidious, some scornful, some brain-sick and mad, the prophet comprises all these vices in one word. For our heart shall not be accounted soft and pliable to hear God, unless we receive his doctrine reverently, and with a zealous desire to obey it. But if his authority have no weight with us, we deem no better of him than of a mortal man: wherein our hardness of heart betrays itself, whether it proceed only from sloth, or pride, or rebelliousness. And he used an odious term purposely, to make the contempt of the word more abhorred: as in the law, under the name of adultery, he condemns all manner of lechery and impure desires; and, under the term murder, all kinds of violence and wrong, yea, and even hatred and secret grudge too. Therefore, whosoever overlooks God's word negligently, and is not careful to obey it, though he be not openly stubborn, yet is he said to be stone-hearted. And yet the papists ridiculously endeavour to build freewill upon this passage. First, it is to be noted that by nature all men's hearts are stony. For the scripture, when it speaks of stony-heartedness, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, restrains not that defect to a few, but pronounces in general what the nature of man is: nevertheless, although there be such a corruptness bred within us by nature, yet as the same is wilful, and we are not senseless as stones, whosoever suffers not himself to be ruled by God's word, hardens his own heart, which was already stony before, and so is convicted of his stubbornness by his own conscience. And yet it follows not that it is in our hand to have a heart soft and pliable to either part. For the corruption of nature makes the whole will of man to be inclined, yea, and to be carried away to evil: yet every man hardens himself as often as he obeys

not God, for he cannot father the blame of his naughtiness upon any but himself.

9 *When your fathers, &c.*] The prophet covertly gives us to understand, as I have told before, that the Jews were of a froward and in a manner indomitable nature, even from the beginning; yet was it necessary, for two considerations, that the children should be put in remembrance of their fathers' fault. We know how forward we are to slip by following their example: for both that seems lawful which has once prevailed, and antiquity always challenges some reverence to itself, and the examples of our own ancestors blind our eyes, so that they that come after do without discrimination eagerly adopt, in lieu of virtue, whatsoever has proceeded from their ancestors. And therefore we see how audaciously the authority of the fathers is wont to be set against the word of God in popedom; yea and the Jews also, with whom it was an ordinary matter to glory in their fathers, might more easily have been deceived in this behalf. And therefore not without cause does the prophet withdraw them from their fathers, because their ingratitude was detestable. The other reason is that which I have touched upon heretofore, that they might know that they had need of warning. For if there had been no rebelliousness in their fathers, they might soon have replied, To what purpose commandest thou us that we should not harden our hearts, seeing our ancestors have hitherto been willing to be taught, and ready to obey? But as their fathers had been hard-hearted and stubborn from the beginning, the prophet shews that it is not for nought that he stands now so earnestly upon the correcting of this fault. The things that follow may be expounded two ways: for, seeing that to tempt God is nothing else than to be impelled by unhallowed and unlawful desire to seek a trial of his power, it may be read in one strain, *They tempted me, and proved me, although they had seen my working already before.* And surely this complaint of God's was just, that although he had by so many proofs signally avouched his ability among them, yet they sought new trials still. Nevertheless, the word *prove* may be taken otherwise also, after this manner; Your fathers tempted me, when, closing their eyes to my so many benefits, they demanded where God was: they *proved* therefore, that is to say, they found by experience, because I ceased not to put forth openly the signs of my presence among them, and so consequently they *saw my work.* Which soever of these sentences you choose, the prophet's meaning tends to this effect, that the Jews were less excusable, because they required to have God's power manifested unto

them, whereof they had been assured so often by experience before, as though they had not known what he was able to do. In demanding why God had left them destitute of meat and drink, although there had been no sign shewn before, they betrayed their own intemperateness. But seeing God had by a stretched out hand plucked them out of Egypt, and by so many evident tokens shewn himself to be at hand to them, when they doubt of his presence as though he had been hidden from them before, their perverse forgetfulness augments their crime. Therefore, all things considered, I had rather explain the prophet's words thus ; Your fathers tempted me, when notwithstanding they had enough and more than enough proved me (that is to say, by true and evident assurances found me) to be God, or rather when my works had been apparent to their eyes. And this doctrine pertains indifferently to us also. For the more effectually God's grace and power hath been testified to us, if we still seek for new trials of him, so much the more abominable is our wickedness: even as at this day we see many crave miracles, and some quarrel with God, if he grants not their desires. But here arises a question, wherefore the prophet, passing over so many histories, makes mention only of Meriba? For seeing that even in the very passing of the Red sea they began already to rebel against God, and never ceased from that day forward, in upbraiding them with the one crime, he seems by his silence to absolve them from the rest. But seeing that synecdoches are rife in the scripture, it will be no absurdity if we say that many are denoted under one kind. Nevertheless, there seems to be some other reason why the prophet chose this example before others. For it is easy to gather from the writings of Moses, that this was the crowning instance of the people's ingratitude and contumacy, when they quarrelled for water. I know that interpreters think otherwise; but yet the fact is, that at that time they filled up the measure of their iniquity, so that that commotion alone, being as it were the catastrophe of all their doings, openly shewed that their stubbornness was past cure.

10 *Forty years long, &c.*] The prophet exaggerates the crime of their obstinate malice, in that God had so long striven with it, and could not avail. For it is wont to happen now and then that some petulance vents itself, which in a moment after subsides. But God complaineth that he had continual wranglings with this people for forty years together: whence it may be gathered that their waywardness was unable to be tamed. And he uses the term *generation* to the same end. For *דור* signifies *an age*, or *the space*

of human life. And he transfers it to the men of one age, as if the prophet should say, as long as the Israelites lived whom God had delivered, they could not be subdued to obedience. Some translate the word זָקַן, *I was despised*: and the Greek interpreter translates it προσώχθισα, *I was angry or sore grieved*. But the Hebrews keep the natural sense, that God through their wrangling had continual strife with them, which was a notable proof of their incorrigible stubbornness. After that he sets forth his judgment; as if he should say, after they had in so many ways betrayed their wickedness their perverseness was more than enough proved. And he says not the *error of heart* to extenuate their fault, but he pronounces that they are lost to all sense, and beside themselves; as if he should say he had not to deal with men endued with reflection and understanding, but rather with beasts. And the reason is, because they had given no heed to so many works of God, and especially to his teaching. For under the word יָדָה he comprehends as well the law and the continual warnings, as the miracles by which God had instructed them. Seeing then that the Lord had dwelt familiarly in the midst of them, and manifested his glory, as well by works as by word, it was a strange alienation of mind in them to pass over all these things with their eyes shut. This is the reason why the prophet condemns their insensibility as phrensy, because that in so great light they erred as if they had been blind.

11 *Wherefore I swear, &c.*] If you like to take the relative אֲשֶׁר in its proper sense, I am not against it, according also as many have translated it. The Greek interpreter, taking it to be a mark of similitude, has rendered it ὥς; the inference, however, seems not inapplicable; not that they were then first deprived of the promised heritage when they had tempted God, but after that the prophet has spoken of their stubbornness, in the person of God, he gathers that they were not for nought prohibited by an oath from entering into the Holy Land. For it appeared enough, and more than enough, by their continual progress in wickedness, as they could by no means be amended, that they were not without good consideration prohibited from the rest of God. For the meaning will be the more apparent if you read it in the preterpluperfect tense, *I had sworn*; for before that falling out, God, foreseeing their naughtiness already, had excluded them from the promised heritage. To what purpose this elliptical form of oath serves, I have already shewn. Also why the land of Canaan is called *his rest*, the reason must be fetched out of the promise. For Abraham and his posterity wandered as pilgrims therein

till the full time was come that they should possess it, and Egypt was their temporary sojourn, and as it were their place of banishment. Since therefore God, according to the covenant, was now ready to settle the Jews in the land of Canaan as their rightful inheritance, he with good reason calls it *his rest*. Which notwithstanding is to be understood actively; namely, because it was his singular benefit that the Jews should dwell there as it were in their native soil and peaceful home. Now it is worth while to compare the passage of the apostle in Heb. iii. and iv. with the words of the prophet. It ought not to seem absurd that the apostle follows the Greek translation. For he does not undertake professedly to handle that passage, but only stands upon the adverb *to-day*, and upon the noun *rest*. First therefore he shews that that same *to-day* is not restricted to the time of the law, but is properly applied to the Gospel, in which God began to speak more fully. But the perfection of the doctrine doth justly require more heed. Surely, since God hath not ceased to speak, but inviteth us to him daily by manifesting Christ, we must use the occasion that we may obey his voice. In the second place he reasons more subtly upon the word *rest* than the prophet's words import. For he assumes this for a principle, that since under the denunciation of punishment there is included a tacit promise, there is promised to God's people a better rest than in the land of Canaan. For after the Jews were come in thither, God put his church in hope of a new rest. The apostle expressly declares that the denial of ourselves is the thing whereby we keep holy day from our own works, God working in us. And taking occasion from this, he compares the old Sabbath of the law, which was but as a shadow, with the spiritual newness of life. When he saith *he sware in his wrath*, he giveth us to understand that he was in a manner forced to lay this punishment upon them; as if he should say, It was no light or small provocation, but their abominable waywardness kindled mine anger, which at the same time forced me to swear.

PSALM XCVI.

It is an exhortation to praise God, which is directed not only to the Jews, but also to all the Gentiles. Whereby we gather that this Psalm has reference to the kingdom of Christ. For until he was manifested to the world, his name could not be called upon elsewhere than in Judah, and in respect of this duty of devotion, the Gentiles were both dumb and deaf. Meanwhile, no doubt but under the law the Holy Ghost stirred up the faithful to set forth the praises of God, until Christ, enlightening all corners of the world with his glory, extended the light of the true doctrine even thither also.

1 Sing unto the Lord a new song. Sing unto the Lord all the earth.

2 Sing unto the Lord, praise his name : shew forth his salvation from day to day.

3 Declare his glory among the heathen, and his wondrous works among all people.

1 *Sing unto the Lord, &c.*] This opening shews, as I said, that the prophet exhorts not only the Israelites, but the whole world indiscriminately, to testify their devotion, which could not be done till God was made known everywhere by his Gospel. For we must always bear in mind that saying of Paul, Rom. x. 14, *How shall they call upon him on whom they have not believed?* And as the same Paul elsewhere, Rom. xv. 10, proves the calling of the Gentiles by this text, *Praise him ye heathen together with his people*, it follows that there is fellowship of faith in the consent of praise. Add to this that the prophet requires not a common or ordinary song, but a new one, whereby we gather that he was speaking of an unwonted and extraordinary grace of God: even as Isaiah, xlii. 10, where he speaks of the restoration of the church, because it was an incredible miracle, says, *Sing unto the Lord a new song*. The prophet therefore warns them that the time will come that God will raise up his kingdom after an unlooked-for manner. Again, he expresses more clearly that all people shall be partakers of God's grace, enjoining them to set forth his salvation everywhere. And he assures them that this salvation is not transitory or fading, but that it flourishes everlastingly, for he will have it commended from day to day.

3 *Declare his glory, &c.*] He ennobles that salvation with other terms, namely, *glory* and *wonders*, as if he should

say, it shall be glorious and wonderful: by which appellations he distinguishes it from the deliverances of old time. As doubtless God shewed a much more noble and excellent proof both of his immeasurable goodness and power, when he appeared as the Redeemer of the whole world, than ever theretofore. But this salvation, as I observed just now, could not have been preached to the Gentiles, if they had been excluded from it. Now, we are warned by these words that we do not acknowledge the redemption purchased by Christ as it deserves, except we lift up our thoughts to the incomparable miracle that shines forth in it.

4 For the Lord is great, and much to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods.

5 For all the gods of the heathen are but vanities: but the Lord made the heavens.

6 Power and beauty are before him; strength and worship are in his sanctuary.

4 *For the Lord, &c.*] He characterizes that God whom he will have praised, lest the Gentiles should go astray in their own vain imaginations according to their wont. Therefore, that the whole world may cast away their superstition, and betake themselves to the true religion, he shews that the only one God is worthy of all praise. And this is a matter of deep concern; for unless men restrain themselves with this bridle, the more they labour to praise God the more will they rob him of his glory. Therefore we must keep this order, lest by our temerity we dishonour God's name, even as the unbelievers do, while they give honour to false gods, the work of their own hands. The term of *Elohim* may be understood as well of angels as of idols, as I have said in Psalm xcv. 3. But I continue of the same opinion as I expressed then, namely, that in that word is comprehended every kind of thing that is a god, or is taken for a god. For as God irradiates the whole world by his angels, there shine forth in them scintillations of the godhead. Now when men make idols to themselves, they devise themselves gods out of nothing. The prophet therefore teaches how greatly they are deceived who yield more glory than they ought either to the angels or to their own idols, who may lead them away from the true and only one God. He then confutes the insane folly of the Gentiles, because all the things they call god are but vanity and nought, for that among the Hebrews is the import of the term אֱלִילִים, which is transferred in contempt to idols. The

effect is, that as true and perfect godhead exists only in the Maker of the world, the religions that corrupt the pure worship of him are trumpery and foolish. But it is demanded whether angels ought to be accounted as vanity or things of nought, because many are deceived in them, thinking them gods. I answer, that the angels are wronged when the majesty of God is transferred to them, and yet that their nature is not therefore brought to nothing, but that whatsoever imaginary qualities are superadded to them are nought. Still the subject under discussion here is merely the gross delusions of the Gentiles, who have daringly carved themselves gods out of their own imaginations. But, before the prophet disproved their forgeries, he said, wisely, that God is great, and much to be praised; that is to say, that he excelleth in suchwise that the immensity of his glory easily swallows up all that men dream of as belonging to their idols. Also the boldness of the prophet should be noted, when despising the common opinion of all mortal men he strenuously maintains the glory of the true God. A great and sore encounter had the true worshippers of God in those days against such a heap of superstitions as the world was then fraught with: for the true God lay hid in Judah, as it had been in an obscure nook. Jupiter was everywhere in highest renown; all Asia, Europe, and Africa, rang with his name. Though every country had its peculiar gods, yet obtained they renown in other places also. Only the true God was deprived of his honour. Though, therefore, the whole world had conspired in support of lies, yet the prophet here looks down with lofty contempt upon what all mortal men imagine or approve by their suffrages: because their vanity derogates nought from the glory of the one God. Whence it follows that it would be sheer folly that a judgment should be formed on religion according to the general opinion of the multitude, because if religion were determined on the votes of men, or the worship of God depended on the assent of men, this sentence of the prophet would fall to the ground. Therefore, however countless multitudes of men may agree in an error, let us freely exclaim, following the Holy Spirit, that they cannot diminish God's glory, because, as they themselves are vanity, so all that proceeds from them is vain and fallacious. Now, when he has avouched God's glory, he also confirms it, because the image thereof shines forth in the frame of the world. For as it is the property of a God to be self-existent, and to stand by his own power, it follows that all those are but counterfeit gods that are not the makers of the world. And he has put *the heavens*, as a part for the whole, because the power of

God is more conspicuous in them in proportion to their garbure and beauty.

6 *Power and beauty, &c.*] As *וַיִּשְׁבַּח* signifies *puissance*, I think the translators did not well consider the nature of the context, when they translated it *glory*. For surely in the second member there is a repetition of the same proposition, and there it is said, *strength and glory are in his sanctuary*. By which words he means that God cannot be known aright, without there shining in him incomparable power and majesty; and he names *power* and *strength* in the foremost place, as the ground of his glory. And because God is of himself invisible, the prophet calls back the faithful to the sanctuary, which was the assurance of his presence, as we have seen heretofore. For as the weakness of our mind cannot climb up to the height of heaven, the prophet tells us his glory is not hidden from us, because it was his will to have glorious tokens of his presence appear in the temple, in the sacrifices, and in the ark of the covenant. Furthermore, as often as mention is made of God, let us learn to conceive in our minds this glory which shines in his face. For they that separate his power from him, rather imagine a lifeless entity, than a living godhead.

7 Bring unto the Lord, ye congregations of people, bring unto the Lord honour and strength.

8 Bring unto the Lord the honour of his name; take up an offering, and enter into his courts.

9 Worship before the Lord in the beauty of his sanctuary: tremble at the sight of him all the earth.

7 *Bring unto the Lord, &c.*] Considering that in those days God was as yet to be praised in Sion, and that that place was consecrated to the celebration of God's name, and also that the posterity of Abraham alone were adorned with the priesthood, it is not to be doubted that the prophet points out here the renewing of the church, which at length came to pass by the coming of Christ. There is, therefore, an antithesis between the people of old time, and the families of the heathen, which should at length be made partakers of the same adoption. Moreover, *to bring glory and strength*, is equivalent to ascribing the glory of strength. And to shew that men bring nothing of their own, but that they wickedly defraud God of his due praise if they honour him not, he adds afterwards, *the glory of his name*; by which he means that he borrows it not elsewhere, but that the praise which he requires to be given him, has its foun-

dation in himself. He also expressly invites the Gentiles to yield this same honour to God, as well as the Jews, not because we must now worship God with the outward ceremonies that were appointed of old in the law, but he intimates that there shall be one rule or form of devotion in which all people shall agree. But if the wall had not been broken down, it would not have been permitted to the Gentiles to enter into the courts of the sanctuary in common with God's children. Also it is a manifest prophecy of the future calling of the Gentiles, who could not be gathered to the holy congregation till their uncleanness was purged away. *Minhah* was indeed but one particular kind of sacrifice; yet the prophet comprehends under it the whole service of God, because this was a more ordinary profession of devotion. And it appears as well from this as many other passages, that wheresoever the prophets treat of the kingdom of Christ, they designate the inward worship of God under the symbols of their own time. For God was not pleased to have offerings of cakes made to him after Christ was set forth. But it is as if the prophet should say that the doors of the temple, which had been kept shut against the heathen in times past, should be set open to them. And with what sacrifices God will be worshipped in these days, the apostle teaches briefly in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The less therefore are the papists to be borne with, when they wrest these texts in support of their mass or other fooleries. At the same time we may infer conclusively from this passage that the true worshippers of God come not empty into his presence; even as we are commanded to yield our reasonable service to him, by offering ourselves and all that is ours, in sacrifice to him, 1 Peter ii. 2.

9 *Worship before the Lord, &c.*] He still continues to treat of the same proposition. For when God required oblations of his people in old time, he did it not because he had need of men's service, but that they might make profession of their faith. The prophet therefore teaches to what purpose offerings pertain; namely, that the faithful should cast themselves down before God, and acknowledge that themselves and all that they have are his. And again he makes mention of the beauty of the temple, purposing to shew that the heathen were to be adopted into a new honour, that they should form one body with the elect people. But at the time this Psalm was made, it was a thing by no means capable of being received by the people generally, that the heathen nations should be admitted into the temple promiscuously with the holy family of Abraham. But our calling, which was then looked upon as a thing

utterly incredible, ought deservedly to appear the better attested to us; because it is quite clear that a door of salvation would not have been opened to us otherwise than by divine power. And by the title of *beauty*, the prophet procures reverence to the temple, that men should not rush rashly into God's presence, but that they should bring with them fear and lowliness. The close of the verse has reference to the same point: *tremble before the face of him*; that considering how great the majesty of God is, they should bow themselves humbly before him. And yet he meant not to put the worshippers of God in fear to scare them from access to him, (for nothing ought to be more sweet or pleasant to them than to seek him,) but because it is requisite that we should be made meek in order to worship God truly and earnestly. And the goodliness or beauty of the temple consisted not in silver or gold, nor in precious materials, or squared stones, nor any of all the other kinds of splendour or riches, but in the image of the heavenly prototype which was shewn to Moses in the mount; *Exod. xxv. 9*.

10 Say among the heathen, The Lord is King: verily the world shall be set fast, and shall not be moved; he shall judge the nations in righteousness.

11 Let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.

12 Let the field rejoice, and whatsoever is therein; and let the trees of the wood sing aloud

13 Before the Lord: for he is come, he is come to judge the earth: he shall judge the world in righteousness, and the nations in truth.

10 *Say among the heathen, &c.*] Again he impresses the doctrine that the worship of God is not perfect, save when he presides as supreme ruler. For as long as God's throne was in a corner of Judah, the Gentiles could not profess his religion aright, as they obeyed not his rule. The prophet therefore extends his kingdom to the uttermost regions of the world, that those who were before dispersed might coalesce under his auspices. And by the word *say*, he intimates that God's will is to have the borders of his kingdom enlarged by his word and his doctrine. And that which he adds concerning the establishing of the world, is worthy to be noted. For though we know that the order of nature was established by God from the beginning, that the same sun, moon, and stars, always shone in the heaven, that unbelievers have always been sustained with the same food as

the faithful, and that they have breathed the same breath of life, yet still it is to be considered that all things are confused, and that a horrible ἀταξία, like a deluge, keeps all the world drowned in darkness so long as ungodliness possesses men's hearts: for what can be stable without God? Not without reason therefore does this place teach that the world is established as that it shall not waver any more, when men are brought under God's obedience. Whence we must also learn that although each creature perform its office, yet is nothing in the world in order until God have set up his regal seat among men to govern them. For what can exhibit a more hideous desolation than when the Creator himself is not recognised? Again, how firm soever misbelievers stand in their own conceits, yet must they needs be always tossed about like the waves of the sea, and their life must always hang by a thread, because their state is not grounded upon God. And here it behoves us to call to remembrance that which we have seen in Psalm xlv. 6; *God is in the midst of his holy city, and therefore shall it not be moved.* Neither do I dislike the notion, (since all things were as yet in suspense under the law,) that the full estate of happiness which was to come under Christ, is indirectly compared with those preludes to it. Afterwards he predicts that this kingdom shall be full of uprightness, even as we have seen in Psalm xlv. 6; *The sceptre of thy kingdom is a sceptre of uprightness.* The word *judge*, signified among the Hebrews any manner of government. Now if the manner of God's reigning be to frame and settle man's life according to uprightness; first, we may gather that howsoever men may flatter themselves, yet are all things out of course, till Christ subdue them to himself. And this uprightness is not only referred to the outward actions of life, but is an inward newness of the heart, because it depends upon the regeneration of the Spirit, whereby we are formed again according to the image of God.

11 *Let the heavens, &c.*] The better to enhance the greatness of God's grace, in vouchsafing to gather all men under his hand, he calls also the dumb creatures, as the trees, the earth, the sea, and the heavens, to the fellowship of the same gladness. And he speaks not by way of metonymy of angels or men, for he bids the very fishes make a noise for joy. It is therefore a hyperbolical expression, whereby he expresses that nothing is more desirable or blessed than to be under God's protection. At the same time he gives us to understand that God reigneth not after a tyrannical and terrible manner, but that his government is full of tenderness and joy. For that the ungodly are smitten with fear when the throne

of God is set up, is what they bring upon themselves. However it is such a hyperbole as is not unsupported by reason. For like as now, according to St. Paul, Rom. viii. 22, all the elements travail and groan with us, because they are subject to corruption for our sakes, so is it no marvel if the restoration of the world which they anxiously wait for, make them glad. From this passage also we gather how frantick is the exultation of men when they give themselves full liberty without regard to God. In the last clause we are taught more plainly that as long as the countenance of God is held from us not a spark of true joy irradiates us. They leap for joy, says he, at the presence of God, because he is come. Now if the sea and the earth be overwhelmed with heaviness till the coming of God appear, what shall become of us, on whom the horrible curse peculiarly lies? And because it was a matter hard to be believed, the prophet twice repeats it, and at the same time defines that uprightness which he glanced at just before, that is, that *God shall govern the world with his own righteousness and truth.* Whence it follows that the depravity and hypocrisy that are bred naturally in men, are not purged and dispelled otherwise than by the light of God's justice and truth.

PSALM XCVII.

This Psalm also describes the kingdom of God, such as it was not manifested under the law. Whence it follows that it is a prophecy of Christ's kingdom, which shone forth suddenly by means of the Gospel. Furthermore, the prophet adorns God with such greatness and glory as ought in reason to force all men to humility. After that, to win men to feel a love and favour to God's kingdom, he admonishes them that it tends to no other end than the welfare and salvation of men.

1 The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the great islands be glad.

2 Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the place of his throne.

3 Fire shall walk before his face, and burn up his enemies round about him.

4 His lightnings gave light unto the world: the earth shall see it, and tremble thereat.

5 The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

1 *The Lord reigneth, &c.*] While alluring men to gladness he declares sufficiently that God never reigneth but salvation and full felicity beam upon them at the same time. And in communicating this joy to the whole world, yea and to the nations beyond the sea, he gives us to understand that God's kingdom which then was enclosed within the narrow bounds of Judah, shall be far more ample because it shall be extended to the Gentiles also. In the four next verses the prophet, adorning God's glory with its proper titles, meant to subdue all men to reverence him. For his awful majesty is set forth, to the end it should throw down and tread under foot the pride and unhallowed boldness of the flesh. We know there is more terror in beholding the sky when arrayed in clouds than when it is clear and lightsome, because that darkness spreads a gloom over our minds. Therefore, I doubt not but the prophet strikes terror into men by this representation, that the world should receive God the more reverently. Others expound it more subtly, that there is a cloud round about God, to restrain the rashness and overboldness of man's heart, lest they that are too curious should allow themselves too much liberty in searching out God's mysteries. Although this exposition contain a profitable lesson, yet as I delight not in refinements, I hold to the meaning of the prophet, which is to strike men's hearts with the clouded countenance of God, so that they should quake at it. Which is also confirmed by the sequel of the text, where he says that *fire walketh before him* to burn up his enemies, and that his thunders shake the earth, yea, and also melt the mountains. If any one except that this dreadfulness agrees not with the gladness mentioned before, I answer first, that though God by setting up his throne is ready, as much as in him lieth, to make all men happy, yet are not all capable of receiving his benefits. Again, we must bear in mind what I touched upon before, that it is an available doctrine to the faithful, to make them cast away all carnal pride and suppliantly adore God with lowliness. Now by establishing his throne in *justice and judgment* he commends God's kingdom for the fruit we derive from it. For as there is no greater wretchedness than to live without justice and judgment, the prophet specially claims this praise for God, that by his reigning he alone restoreth justice in the world, as doubtless it is banished from us all until God by the spirit of meekness boweth and subdueth us to take the yoke of his word upon us. But as very many men wilfully reject and shake off the commandment of God, the prophet is constrained to paint the countenance of God as stern, that he may teach us that the ungodly shall not escape with impunity

in their stubborn iniquity. And seeing that the wickedness of men is doubled, if they do not reverently and mildly receive God when he draweth near to them, this denouncing of vengeance is justly applied to the kingdom of Christ. And verily, as for them that despise God in the person of his only-begotten Son, the prophet says, that at length, whether they will or not, they shall feel how dreadful is his majesty; for so means he by the word *see*. For when the wicked see that all their striving against God is vain, with insane rashness they begin to seek subterfuges and dark evasions, but yet the prophet denies that this stupidity of theirs can avail them to hide them from the face of God.

6 The heavens have declared his righteousness, and all people have seen his glory.

7 A shame take all the servers of imagery, that glory in forgeries: let all gods worship before him.

8 Sion heard it, and was glad of it; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O Lord.

6 *The heavens, &c.*] He affirms that God's justice shall be so gloriously known that even the heavens shall shew forth the same. But yet that which is said here differs from that sentence in Psalm xix. 2; *The heavens declare the glory of God, &c.* For in that place David shews only that there shines forth in the frame of the heavens an image or resemblance of God's wisdom and power, as if God should assert his claim to them by the testimony of his tongue. But here he says that the spiritual justice which God shall shew openly under the kingdom of Christ, shall be so great, that it shall fill both heaven and earth. And there is great force in this proso-popœia, when he brings in the heavens speaking of God's justice, as though a sense of it had penetrated even to them.

7 *A shame take all, &c.*] Here the prophet, as in the last Psalm, openly distinguishes the true God from all the devices of men, lest any one should wrest these glorious titles to counterfeit godship. We easily admit that God is to be praised; but, such is our proneness to superstition, hardly one in a hundred keeps himself in the pure worship of God; but as soon as mention is made of God, we run off to the figments of our own distempered imaginations. And although every man has his peculiar deity, the coinage of his own brain, yet we rest contented in so heterogeneous a medley. This is the reason why the prophets, when they exhort men to the worship of God, are so careful to point out at the same

time who is the true God, lest they should address their devotion to false gods. But in the prophet's system this also is worthy to be noted, that wicked superstitions do not vanish otherwise than by the prevalence of true religion in the mind. For as they attain not to the true God by reason of the dulness of their understandings, they must needs beguile themselves in their own leasings, which are dispelled and purged away only by the knowledge of God, even as the sun by his shining light disperses the darkness. There is some religious feeling naturally bred in men; but because such is not only the imbecility but even the blindness and apathy of our mind, that it immediately corrupts the apprehension of the godhead which we have conceived, the consequence is, that the fear of God is the beginning of all superstitions; not indeed of its own nature, but because men's minds are darkened, so that they are not able to discern the true God from idols. But as soon as the truth of God becomes known it is of sufficient power to put to flight and to chase away all superstitions. For if the sun, as I said, absorbs all impediments that dim the air, what will not the countenance of God himself effect? No marvel therefore if the prophet, having spoken before of the kingdom of God, pour contempt upon the heathen who glory in their graven images, according as Isaiah, xix. 1, where he speaks of the rising of the light of the Gospel, adds presently, *then shall all the graven images of Egypt decay*. Moreover, seeing that the knowledge of God was hidden from men, let us not marvel though such various superstitions overwhelmed the world from the beginning. And the same reason is of force now also. For we know that the light of true doctrine is quenched among the Turks, Jews, and Papists. Wherefore it cannot be but they must lie besotted in their own errors, because it is impossible for them to return to a sound understanding, so that they should repent them of their errors, unless they knew and acknowledged the true God. For by the word *shame* the prophet means that it is time that they who have been given to superstitions, should amend, and apply themselves to the worship of the one true God. Not that all men are alike touched with true repentance, (for we see many Lucian-like men at this day, who having shaken off superstitions, put on the shamelessness of a harlot,) but the knowledge of God brings forth this fruit of itself, that men, condemning their errors, turn themselves to God. As for such as wilfully resist God, even as we see many at this day who continue obstinate in the popish faith, there is no doubt, for all that, but they are cast down in themselves, so as they lie confounded with their stubbornness. When

afterwards he says, *let all gods worship before him* : although it properly applies to the angels, in whom there is reflected some portion of the godhead, yet may it by a figure be extended to false gods, as if he had said, whatsoever else is accounted for a god, let it give place and submit itself, that the one true God may be exalted. And hence may be gathered a true definition of godliness, that is, when the true God is worshipped wholly and exclusively, and he alone hath the pre-eminence in such a manner that no creature casts a shadow upon his majesty. And except we will have the true religion go to wreck among us, we must hold to this principle, that we advance not any creature unduly.

8 *Sion heard it, &c.*] Although he had before made it a common joy to all the world, now he speaks peculiarly to the chosen people, first because to them were offered the first-fruits of that gladness, and secondly to remove all jealousy and envy. Although therefore he said that the Gentiles should be made partakers with the children of Abraham, now he adds that nothing is lost to the Jews by this participation, but rather that they have just cause to be glad, that God watereth the whole world out of their fountain. However the prophet speaks only of the genuine children of Abraham, who had a twofold joy, when God extended his dominion and glory from the sun-rising to the going down thereof; first, because God did then perfect in Christ the redemption that he had promised; and, secondly, because they saw God's glory, which had lain hidden in Judah, spread abroad everywhere. And it was no small confirmation of their faith, when the heathen, (according to the prophecy,) blessed themselves as in the seed of Abraham, and the religion that had been either hated or despised was everywhere received. But why says he rather that Sion heard it, than that she saw it? I answer, that the prophet used this word for two reasons; namely, that the faithful, before it were fulfilled, should notwithstanding conceive gladness beforehand by hope; and, secondly, he intimates that the glory of the Gospel shall be spread abroad far and wide, so that the Jews should know of it rather by report than by sight.

9 For thou, O Lord, art high above all the earth ; thou art greatly exalted above all gods.

10 You that love the Lord, hate that which is evil : he preserveth the souls of his meek ones ; and he will deliver them out of the hand of the ungodly.

11 Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

12 Be glad ye righteous in the Lord; and celebrate ye the memorial of his holiness.

9 *For thou, O Lord, &c.*] As I have expounded the words before, I will not dwell much upon them; only, we must mark the comparison between God and the angels, and whatsoever excel. For the prophet brings all that is exalted under obedience in suchwise as that all majesty should be concentrated in the one God, and that was shewn more fully at such time as God appeared in his only-begotten Son, who is his express image, for as before that time the knowledge of him was more obscure, so his exaltation was less conspicuous.

10 *You that love, &c.*] Here he exhorts the worshippers of God to follow uprightness; as also Paul, 2 Tim. ii. 19, says, *Let every one that calleth upon the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.* Therefore he proves, from the nature of God, that none are acknowledged or accounted in the number of his servants but such as depart from wickedness, that they may give themselves wholly to upright dealing; for as he is the wellspring of all righteousness he must of necessity hate all iniquity, because he cannot deny himself. And therefore he holdeth us bound unto him under this condition, that we should be separate from all unrighteousness. Because, however the malice of our enemies oftentimes stirs us to revenge, and it seems to us that we cannot escape harmless but by unhallowed means, the prophet, to provide a remedy for these temptations, declares that God is the preserver of those that are his. For they that are persuaded in themselves that they dwell under God's protection, contend not with the wicked, nor requite the wrongs that they have received, by rendering evil for evil, but commit their salvation to its faithful protector. Thus, a bridle is put upon us to prevent its being painful or grievous to us to abstain from iniquity, and keep our hands undefiled, howsoever the wicked provoke us, when God vouchsafeth to take our souls into his holy keeping.

11 *Light is sown, &c.*] He confirms the last proposition, and at the same time anticipates an objection that might be brought against it: for we see the righteous often harshly and unworthily dealt with, as though they were given up to the lust of their enemies. The prophet therefore answers, that though God deliver not his servants presently, yet he defendeth their welfare by his secret power. And in the

first part of the verse there is a double metaphor. For by the word *light* he denotes gladness, or prosperous success, (which manner of speech is rife in the scriptures,) even as adversity is likened to darkness. The latter metaphor, in the word *sown*, seems somewhat of the harshest. Some say that gladness is sown for the righteous, in like manner as seed, when it is cast into the ground, dies or lies hid for a season, before it spring again: which exposition, although I disallow not, yet, if I am not deceived, the simpler sense would be, That though the righteous can scarce find place upon earth, or at least dare not come abroad into the face of the world, but lie as it were buried, yet doth God disperse their felicity far and wide like seed; or will bring forth the light of their joy, which is under restraint. The second member of the verse is an exposition of the first; for he puts *gladness* for *light*, and *the upright in heart* for the righteous. And this definition of righteousness is to be noted; namely, that it is not an exterior visor, but requires unfeigned purity of heart, so that it is not enough to refrain our tongues, hands, and feet from evil, if we desire to be accounted righteous before God. At length, in the last verse, he exhorts the godly to thankfulness; that is, that assuring themselves that God is their deliverer, they should think themselves beholden to his gracious goodness for their life, and be satisfied with his defence, whatsoever betide them.

PSALM XCVIII.

This Psalm is akin to the sixty-fourth, and not only the argument of them is similar, but also they agree in words. The general effect of it is, that as soon as the knowledge of God shall be spread over all the world, his glory shall be more apparent than it has been heretofore, both because when the Redeemer is set forth the effect of the promises given to the offspring of Abraham will appear more fully realized, and also because salvation will suddenly rise up to the whole world; in which respects he enjoins that God's name should be magnified gloriously.

[*A Psalm.*]

1 Sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done wonderful things: his own hand and the arm of his holiness hath gotten him the victory.

2 The Lord hath made his salvation known: in the sight of the heathen hath he uttered his righteousness.

3 He hath remembered his goodness and truth towards the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

1 *Sing unto the Lord, &c.*] I have told you that by these words is betokened an exquisite and singular thanksgiving, which appears also by the reason that is added immediately after; namely, because God had shewn forth his salvation in the face of the world in a wonderful and incredible manner. For, speaking of miracles, he restrains them specially to one point, which is, that God had himself the victory by his own power: by which words he means that the church had been preserved, not by worldly means, or in the ordinary course, but in a manner hitherto unheard of. Isaiah, lix. 16, lauds this miracle in many words: *The Lord looked back, if there were anybody to help; he marvelled that there was no man to intercede: therefore he gat himself victory by his own arm, and established himself in his own righteousness.* In both the places God's arm is contrasted with ordinary means; which, although they be no derogation from God's power, yet because they darken the sight of it, as if they were a sort of veil, it is the same as if the prophet had said, God will not use ordinary means to save the world, but he himself will come abroad, that it may appear that this salvation is his wondrous work. Rightly, therefore, does he conclude, that this wonderful goodness of God, which is incomprehensible to man's understanding, is to be set forth with highest praises. In the second verse he expounds the same thing more apparently, saying that his salvation and righteousness was manifested to the Gentiles. For what could have been less hoped for, than that light should suddenly have risen up in that thick darkness of ignorance and blindness, and that there should be a place for righteousness in a fathomless abyss of iniquities? Now, whereas *salvation*, which is the fruit of righteousness, is put in the foremost place, though the order be inverted, yet is that no rare thing, nor ought it to seem any absurdity, when the subject is God's benefits, that the means, which in order go before, are placed after for the purpose of explanation. Moreover, God's righteousness, out of which flows the salvation of men, consists not in requiring that which they have deserved, but it is the handsel of his goodness, grace, and faithfulness, as has been said heretofore.

3 *He hath remembered, &c.*] After he has spoken of the general revealment of salvation, he commends with a special encomium God's peculiar grace towards his chosen people.

For though God offered himself to be a father to the Gentiles and Jews alike, yet began he with the Jews, that they might be as his first-begotten. For the glory of the Gentiles is this, that they were adopted and grafted into the stock of Abraham; and that the common redemption of the whole world flowed out of the promise made to Abraham; according also as Christ says, John, iv. 22, *Salvation comes of the Jews*. Wherefore, worthily does the prophet say, that God in redeeming the world *remembered the promise* which he had made to the people of Israel. By which words he teaches also, that there was no other cause to induce him to do so, but because he would faithfully perform that which he had promised. And that he may the better shew that this promise is not founded upon the deservings or righteousness of men, he sets *mercy* in the first place, and then joins thereto *faithfulness*, which depends upon it. The effect is, that God departed not out of himself, as men say, but found the cause in his own free goodness and mere goodwill, which he had testified of old to Abraham and his posterity. The word *remember* is referred to men's understanding, because his continual delay might seem to be a sort of forgetfulness. Since indeed the day of the promise there had passed above two thousand years, before Christ was set forth; and in the mean time the faithful were afflicted with so many miseries and overthrows from time to time, that it is no marvel though they sighed sorrowfully, as if they had been cast down from all hope of seeing and enjoying their redemption. When immediately after there is added, *that all the ends of the earth saw the salvation of God*, it not only pertains to his commendation, as if he had said it should be a famous kind of salvation, the renown whereof should extend to the uttermost bounds of the earth; but also it signifies that the Gentiles, who heretofore had been bewitched with their own dotage, should be partakers thereof.

4 Rejoice unto the Lord, all the earth: make a noise, and leap, and clap your hands.

5 Sing praise unto the Lord upon the harp; upon the harp, and with the voice of singing.

6 With trumpets, and with the sound of shalms, sing praises before the Lord the King.

7 Let the sea roar, and all that is therein; the round world, and all that dwell in it.

8 Let the rivers clap their hands; and let the mountains skip

9 At the sight of the Lord: for he is come to judge the earth: he will judge the world in righteousness, and the nations with equity.

4 *Rejoice, &c.*] He repeats the exhortation he had used at the beginning; by directing which to the Gentiles, he shews sufficiently that there shall be but one church through the whole world, into which God, breaking down the wall of partition, shall gather all men into one harmonious faith. In the musical instruments, doubtless he alludes to the custom of his time: at the same time he meant not to bind the Gentiles to the ceremonies of the law. Nevertheless, there is an earnestness in the doubling of the words; as if he had said, How fervently soever men strive to celebrate the redemption of the world, yet can no commendations match the greatness of the grace: which appears the better also by the sequel, where he attributes sense to inanimate creatures. But as this whole text has been expounded heretofore, I deem it superfluous to discourse at length about it.

PSALM XCIX.

This Psalm differs from the former Psalms in one thing, namely, that it extends not to the kingdom of God, and the blessedness that follows the same, without the borders of Judah. But rather, separating the children of Abraham from the rest of the world, in respect of the privilege of their adoption, he provokes them peculiarly to the praising of God.

1 The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: dwelling betwixt the cherubims; let the earth be moved.

2 The Lord is great in Sion, and high is he above all nations.

3 They shall acknowledge thy great and terrible name; it is holy.

4 And the king's power loveth judgment: thou hast established righteousness: thou hast done judgment and justice in Jacob.

1 *The Lord reigneth, &c.*] He only bids the people tremble, whom he had called to gladness before. For as the Jews were beset round about with enemies, it was requisite for God's might to be extolled among them, that they might know that by his defence they would evermore

be preserved against the hatred and outrage of all men. The word רָדַד, as we have seen heretofore, signifies *to quake*, or *tremble*, and sometimes *to be angry*; and consequently it is referred to any manner of agitation, whether it springs from anger or fear. The prophet therefore means now, that God will shew such power in delivering his chosen people, as shall trouble all nations, and make them feel at length how much they had played the madmen to their own destruction. For God is said to reign with reference to men, when he advanceth himself aloft by mighty proofs of his power; because as long as he hideth his help, the unbelievers riot the more boldly, as though he were not.

2 *The Lord is great, &c.*] We must bear in mind the antithesis I spoke of, how that God is great in Sion to destroy and bring to nought the enemies of his church: and when immediately after he adds that he is high above all people, it must not be taken as though he sat sentinel over them to their welfare, but to scatter their counsels to the wind, to confound their attempts, and to overthrow their whole strength. As for that which follows concerning the praising of God's name, it belongs not to all nations, but in my judgment the prophet requires thankfulness only of the faithful. For though God enforce his vanquished enemies to acknowledge him, yet as they cease not to repine at his glory, and also to spit out blasphemies, it would not apply to them when he says, *praise the name of God, for it is holy*. It is the faithful, therefore, peculiarly, that he speaketh to, whom the knowledge of its holiness allureth to the spontaneous celebration of God's name.

4 *And the kings, &c.*] It might be a threat to put the enemies in fear; as if he should say that God is armed with power to revenge wrongs because he loveth righteousness and equity. But I had rather refer it to the church, and that, because it is subject to God's dominion, upon condition that it should cultivate righteousness and holiness. Also there is another sense that would not square ill, that is, that it is unlawful to imagine a tyrannical government in God, because there is a perpetual consent between his power and uprightness. But when I weigh the whole text, I doubt not but that the prophet, after he has placed God on his throne as supreme ruler, now treats of the manner of his reigning: for he adds, that *he hath established righteousness and equity*; which, however, may be taken two ways, either that God hath enjoined to his people perfect equity in his law, or else that he hath always given proof of his righteousness and equity in cherishing and defending his people. And though it be most true that perfect righteousness has al-

ways shone forth in God's works and judgments, yet it seems more probable that it should be understood of his doctrine; namely, that God, who loveth righteousness, instituted a form of government among the people of Israel, which should be the best rule whereby to live honestly and uprightly. And so the word *do* will in a borrowed sense be taken for *to charge* or *command*. Unless, perchance, any one like to take this last of God's government separately, which I do not dislike. For there is nothing that more encourages the faithful to obey God, or that confirms them more in zeal to keep his law, than when they find by experience that God hath a care of them, and that the righteousness which he requireth in words at his servants' hands, the same reciprocally he renders to them by his acts.

5 Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at the footstool of his feet: for he is holy.

6 Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that called upon his name, have cried unto the Lord, and he will answer them.

7 He spake unto them in a pillar of cloud: they kept his testimonies, and the law that he gave them.

8 O Lord our God, thou answeredst them: thou wast a favourable God unto them, and a revenger upon their works.

9 Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at the mountain of his holiness; for the Lord our God is holy.

5 *Exalt the Lord, &c.*] This exhortation is properly directed only to the church; that having had experience of God's gracious goodness, it should devote itself with so much the more alacrity to the observing of godliness. The Jews, then, are they whom he calls to the exalting of God, who had so signally succoured them, and he bids them yield the worship commanded in the law. The temple truly is often elsewhere called *God's seat*, or *house*, or *rest*, or *dwelling-place*: it is called here *the footstool of his feet*, and the reason of this metaphor is undeniable. For it was God's will to dwell in suchwise in the midst of his people, as that they might not hold their minds fixed upon the outward temple and the ark of the covenant, but rather lift them up to heaven. Therefore the term *house*, or *dwelling-place*, availed to inspire confidence, that all the faithful might be bold to approach God familiarly, whom they saw to meet them

without solicitation. But as men's minds are prone to superstition, it was behoveful that this fault should be corrected, that they should not conceive any fleshly or earthly notion of God, nor linger in the outward signs. The prophet, therefore, in calling the temple *God's footstool*, bids the godly mount higher, for he filleth both heaven and earth with his immeasurable glory. However, by this means he admonishes us that rightful worshipping cannot be yielded to God elsewhere than in Sion. For he so tempers his style, that though he lift godly minds above the world, yet does he derogate nought from the holiness of the temple so far forth as God had chosen that only place upon earth wherein he would be called upon. Hereby we perceive how fondly many, following the example of Austin, disquiet themselves to find in whatwise the prophet commands God's footstool to be worshipped. Austin's answer is captious: If we have an eye to Christ's manhood, says he, the way is found how God's footstool may be worshipped without breach of godliness: for he took his body from the earth, in the which it is his will to be worshipped, and yet is not anything worshipped in the said earth but God; for both that earth is the dwelling-place of the godhead, and God himself hath vouchsafed to become earth. All this is plausible to the ear, but irrelevant to the meaning of the prophet, who, minding to put a difference between the law worship, (which was the only worship that God allowed,) and the superstitions of the heathen, calls out the children of Abraham to the temple, as it were to their standard, where, notwithstanding, he commands them to worship God after a spiritual manner, because he dwelleth in the heavenly glory. In these days when shadows are abolished, I confess that God is not rightly worshipped, except when we betake ourselves direct to Christ, in whom dwelleth the fulness of the godhead. But it were improper and absurd for any man to term him *a footstool*. For by this manner of speaking the prophet meant that God was not confined to the visible temple, but was to be sought above all heavens, according as he is Lord of all the world. The hair-brained Greek bishops, in the second council of Nice, abominably perverted this passage, to prove that God was to be worshipped in statues and pictures. The rendering of the cause contains an antithesis. For the prophet, in hallowing the name of the one God, divests all the idols of the heathen of sanctity; as if he should say, Though the heathen claim an imaginary holiness for their idols, yet are they mere vanity, abomination, and offensive dunghills. Others translate it, *for it is holy*; but it will appear, from the end of the Psalm, that it was the

prophet's meaning to distinguish God from all idols by this appellation.

6 *Moses and Aaron, &c.*] He commends the peculiar grace of God, which he vouchsafed to the seed of Abraham, by this distinction; that out of it he chose him prophets and priests to be as it were sponsors between him and the people, to ratify the covenant of salvation. And he names three that excelled in the olden times. For Moses was as it were a spokesman to win the people to God. Aaron fulfilled the same office; and at length Samuel sustained a similar character. And yet no doubt under these three persons he comprehended the whole people with whom God made his covenant. But he enumerates these by name which were, as you would say, the depositaries and keepers of this incomparable treasure. When he says that Moses was one of the priests, it might seem absurd, considering that his sons were but among the ordinary Levites, and that he himself never took upon him the honour of the high priesthood after the law was given. But as the Hebrews call כֹּהֲנִים, *chief men*, such as kings' sons are, there is no impediment why the prophet should not honour Moses with this title, as if he had said he was one of the sacred elders of the church. Again, if we have an eye to the first original, certainly, before the law was given, Moses was endued with the high priesthood. And the prophet's purpose is to be considered; how that God not only adopted the offspring of Abraham, but also, that the credit of the covenant might be the more assured, he would that there should be certain mediators, on whom he laid the charge of calling upon his name. For the *calling upon*, which he makes mention of, is not to be taken for any manner of calling upon, but for such as was by the priests; namely, because they were as ambassadors chosen by God, to come into God's presence in behalf of the whole people, and to speak for them all: *They cried unto, &c.* He explains more fully what I have said even now, that God plied the children of Abraham with singular benefits from the beginning, and that only in respect of the free covenant. For how many benefits soever he bestowed at any time upon the Jews, they flowed all out of that fountain. And therefore, as often as they found God favourable, it behoved them to renew the remembrance of that first favour. Also the prophet makes mention expressly of the visible symbol of the *cloudy pillar*, whereby God's will was to have his ready help attested to all ages, according as God used temporal signs, not only for their sakes to whom they were shewn, but also for their sakes that followed after. Although, therefore, God did not always shew a cloudy

pillar to the eyes of the people in old time, yet, as the dulness of men is such that they perceive not God's presence, except they are put in mind by outward signs, the prophet rightly calls back the Jews to this memorable pledge. For God had appeared openly to their fathers in the wilderness, that their posterity should be certainly assured that he would be at hand with them also. And advisedly he adds that they had kept God's testimonies, that he might hold other ages in the same obedience.

8 *O Lord our God, &c.*] He gives us to understand that they were heard because there was a mutual consent between God's grace and their godliness. Therefore it follows that their posterity ought after their example so to call upon God, not only as that his name may sound outwardly from their tongues, but also that they may keep his covenant with unfeigned affection. Meanwhile he gives us to understand, that whereas God setteth not forth his glory so lovingly and abundantly in all ages, that happens through the fault of men, because their posterity most commonly either fall quite away, or at least slip aside from the faith of the fathers. For it is no marvel when godliness waxes cold in the world, though God also withdraw his hand, or at least stretch it not out in so apparent a manner. *Thou wast a favourable God unto them, &c.* That the thing which he spoke heretofore of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, pertained to the whole people, appears more evidently by these words. And truly they were not priests there for themselves individually, but for the common welfare of the whole people. Wherefore not unfitly does the prophet pass from those three to the remaining body of the people. For neither do I restrain the relatives to those three persons, nor interpret them restrictively of the same men; but I rather suppose the state of the whole church to be denoted; that is, that God at the prayers of his priests was favourable to the Jews, and yet sharply punished their offences. For on the one side he commends God's favour, in that he cherished that people so tenderly, and bare with their sins so mercifully. And on the other part he records the dreadful examples whereby he punished their thanklessness, that their posterity should learn to submit themselves to him obediently. For it is always to be remembered, that the more bountifully God dealeth with us, the less can he abide that his liberality should be scorned. In the close of the Psalm he repeats the sentence that we had in the fifth verse, and instead of the word *footstool*, puts *the hill of his holiness*. And whereas for the sake of brevity he had before said somewhat obscurely, קדוש הוּא, now he declares his meaning more

fully; *The Lord our God is holy.* For his meaning is that God is not worshipped at a venture by the Israelites, (as the religion of the heathen hung all upon opinion alone,) but that his worship is founded upon assurance of faith.

PSALM C.

The title may suffice us for an argument: and again the very shortness of it renders a lengthened commentary unnecessary. He allures the faithful peculiarly to praise God, because he hath chosen them to be his people, and taken them under his care.

[*A Psalm to praise.*]

1 Be joyful in the Lord, all the earth.

2 Serve ye the Lord in gladness; come into his presence with joyfulness.

3 Know ye that even the Lord is God; he hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

1 *Be joyful, &c.*] He touches only upon that part of God's service which consists in recounting his benefits and in thanksgiving. And because he speaks to the whole earth indifferently, he seems to have had an eye in the spirit of prophecy, to the time in which a church was to be gathered out of diverse nations. He commands therefore that *God should be worshipped with gladness*, meaning that he is so bountiful towards his servants, that he ministereth abundant matter of gladness to them: which he expresses better in the third verse, where first he chastises men's overboldness, who wickedly depart from the true God, both in making many gods to themselves, and also in setting up manifold systems of worshipping them. Forasmuch then as the multitude of gods overwhelms and buries the true knowledge of the one God, and defaces his glory, the prophet does well to warn all men to return to their right understandings, and to cease robbing God of his honour. And he reproves their madness, in that not content with the one God, they become foolish in their own conceits. For howsoever all of them are compelled to acknowledge in word that there is some one God the maker of heaven and earth, yet do they presently tear his glory piecemeal. And by that means the godhead, as much as in them lieth, is reduced to nothing. Seeing then it is a matter of great difficulty to retain men in

the pure worship of God, the prophet not without cause calling the world back from their accustomed fondness, bids them consider that God is God. For we must bear in mind the short definition of the knowledge of him, which is when his authority is left entire to him, and no godhead is matched with him to deface his honour. Indeed in the papacy there is left him his name of God, but as his glory is by no means included in two syllables, it is certain that they acknowledge him not for God. Be it known therefore that the worship of God stands not upright until the impious profanation of his honour, which superstitions bring with them, be reformed. Afterwards he publishes his singular benefit, in considering whereof, he will have the faithful chiefly to spend their labour. It seems to be a thing abundantly well known, *that God made us*; but, to say nothing of men's general thanklessness, that scarce one in a hundred in good earnest thinks himself beholden to God for his life, although when they be driven hard, they deny not that they were made of nothing; yet every man is his own god, and worships himself, by imputing every man to his own strength what God avoucheth to be his. Again it is to be considered that the prophet treats not here of the general creation, as I have said heretofore, but of the spiritual regeneration, whereby he formeth his own image new in his elect. It is the faithful only therefore whom the prophet avouches here to be the work of God, not in respect that they were made men in their mother's womb, but in the same sense that Paul, Eph. ii. 10, calls them the *workmanship of God*, because *they are created to good works, which he hath prepared for them to walk in*. And that appears better by the context: for whereas he says, *we are his people and the sheep of his pasture*, doubtless he betokens the special grace whereby God hath separated his children for a peculiar possession to himself, that he may cherish them as it were under his wings, which is a far more excellent matter than to be born men. Now if any man should glory that he was made man by himself, who would not abhor such rank treason against God? Neither is it lawful to impute it to our earthly parents, that they begat us of their own strength: for what could the seed do if left to decompose? And yet the greater part of men scruple not to draw to themselves the praise of the spiritual life. For what else mean the proclaimers of freewill, but to persuade us that we attain to be made sons of God out of Adam's sons, by our own efforts. But the prophet in calling us God's people, teaches that it is through his free goodness that we are spiritually regenerated. And by terming us *the sheep of his pasture*, he gives us to under-

stand that through the same grace, what was once given us, remains secure to us unto the end. It might also be read otherwise, *He hath made us his people, &c.* But as the sense is not changed, I have retained that which was most received.

4 Enter ye into his gates with praise, and into his courts with rejoicing: praise ye him, and bless ye his name.

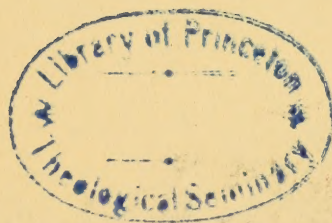
5 For the Lord is gracious, his mercy endureth for ever; and his truth from generation to generation.

4 *Enter ye into his gates, &c.*] The close is for the most part like the beginning, saving that he intermingles mention of the law worship; whereby, however, he does no more than warn them that the faithful discharge not their duty aright in giving thanks to God, except they also exercise themselves in the stated profession of godliness: meanwhile, by the name of the temple he intimates that God will not be worshipped except according to the appointment of his law. Moreover, that we may know that we have continual matter given us to praise God, he says that *his mercy endureth for ever*, and that *his truth also is everlasting*. Seeing then that he ceaseth not to deal in suchwise with us, it were more than a shame for us to be weary in paying him the sacrifice of praise. Why he joins truth with mercy I have told before. For so dull and senseless are we, that we do not feel God's mercy when he displays it openly, no not even when we handle it with our hands, until he open his holy mouth to testify his fatherly love towards us.

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poor, impious person
who denies that there is a
God who cares for mortals

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